

# ASPIRITUAL CONSOLATION: By Blessed JOHN FISHER, Bp and Martyr

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# A SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION

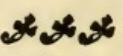


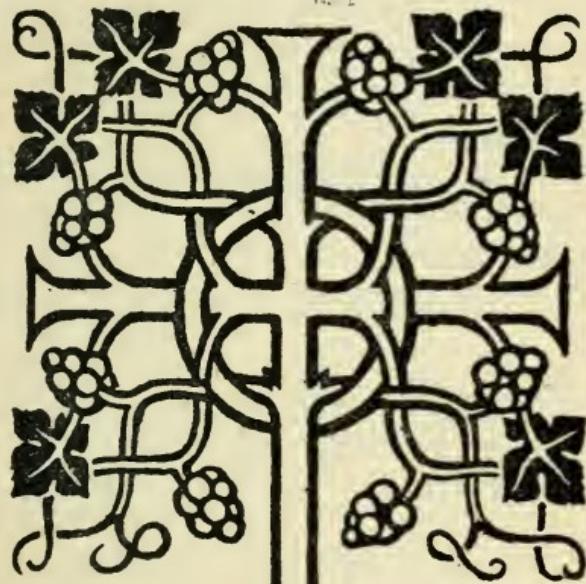


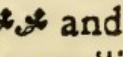


THE BLESSED JOHN FISHER

*From a Drawing by Holbein in the British Museum*

A SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION  
and other Treatises. By the Blessed  
Martyr John Fisher, B<sup>p</sup> of Roche-  
ster. Edited by D. O'Connor 



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Dñs BEDA CAMM, O.S.B.

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## PREFACE

A DESIRE to see Blessed John Fisher better known and appreciated as a spiritual writer has prompted the publication of these small treatises. They present him in a new light, and any one familiar with the writings of St Francis de Sales will, after perusal of this little book, gladly corroborate Canon Mackey's statement that, "had Fisher lived in happier times, he himself would have been another St Francis de Sales." \*

The *Spiritual Consolation* and *Ways to Perfect Religion* were written during his imprisonment in the Tower, and addressed to his sister Elizabeth, a Dominican nun at Dartford in Kent.

The exact date on which the *Sermon on the Passion* was preached is uncertain ; it was first published in London in 1535, the very year of his martyrdom.

The present edition has a spiritual, not a

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\* Cf. Preface to "Letters to Persons in the World" by St Francis de Sales, edited by Canon Mackey, O.S.B., p. xi.

critical, object, and, consequently, any necessary annotation has been kept within narrow compass. The spelling and punctuation have been modified, and a modern equivalent occasionally substituted for some quite obsolete word. Reference to the Scripture texts has not, save in a few cases, been given, as Fisher generally quotes from memory.

Those who desire to make further acquaintance with Blessed John Fisher as an author may be referred to the volume of the Early English Text Society (Vol. 27, Extra Series, 1876) *The English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, Part I, edited with great care by Professor E. B. Mayor, of St John's College, Cambridge.

The beauty of the treatises is their best recommendation ; they cannot fail to increase in the reader an ardent love of God and devotion to the holy martyr.

D. O'C.

*Feast of St Stephen Harding,  
April 1903.*

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¶ A spirituall Consolation, written by Iohn Fyssher, Bishoppe of Rochester, to his Sister Elizabeth, at suche tyme as hee was prisoner in the Tower of London. Very necessary, and commodious for all those that mynde to leade a vertuous lyfe: Also to admonish them, to be at all tymes prepared to dye, and seemeth to bee spoken in the person of one that was sodainly prevēted by death

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2 Corinthians, vj.

*Beholde now if the acceptable tyme  
now is the day of saluation.*

Mathew, xxiiij.

*Watch therefore, for ye know not what  
hour your Lorde doeth come.*

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# A Spiritual Consolation

Written by John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester,  
to his Sister Elizabeth



SISTER Elizabeth, nothing doth more help effectually to get a good and a virtuous life than if a soul, when it is dull and un lusty without devotion, neither disposed to prayer nor to any other good work, may be stirred or quickened again by fruitful meditation. I have therefore devised unto you this meditation that followeth, praying you for my sake and for the weal of your own soul, to read it at such times as you shall feel yourself most heavy and slothful to do any good work. It is a manner of lamentation and sorrowful complaining made in the person of one that was hastily prevented by death (as I assure you every creature may be) : none other surely we have, living in this world here.

But if you will have any profit by reading of it, three things you must do in anywise. First,

when you shall read this meditation, devise in your mind as nigh as you can all the conditions of a man or woman suddenly taken and ravished by death ; and think with yourself that ye were in the same condition so hastily taken and that incontinent you must needs die, and your soul depart hence and leave your mortal body, never to return again for to make any amends, or to do any release to your soul after this hour.

Secondly, that ye never read this meditation but alone by yourself in secret manner, where you may be most attentive thereunto, and when ye have the best leisure without any let of other thoughts or business. For if you otherwise behave yourself in the reading of it, it shall anon lose the virtue and quickness in stirring and moving of your soul when you would ratherest have it stirred.

Thirdly, that when you intend to read it, you must afore lift up your mind to Almighty God and beseech Him that, by the help and succour of His grace, the reading thereof may fruitfully work in your soul a good and virtuous life according to His pleasure, and say : *Deus in adjutorium meum intende, Domine ad adjuvandum me festina. Gloria Patri, etc. Laus tibi Domine Rex æternæ gloriae. Amen.*

ALAS, alas, I am unworthily taken, all suddenly death hath assailed me, the pains of his stroke be so sore and grievous that I may not long endure them; my last hour, I perceive well, is come; I must now leave this mortal body; I must now depart hence out of this world never to return again into it. But whither I shall go, or where I shall become, or what lodging I shall have this night, or in what company I shall fall, or in what country I shall be received, or in what manner I shall be treated, God knoweth, for I know not. What if I shall be damned in the perpetual prison of hell, where be pains endless and without number? Grievous it shall be to them that be damned for ever, for they shall be as men in most extreme pains of death, ever wishing and desiring death, and yet never shall they die. It should be now unto me much weary, one year continually to lie upon a bed were it never so soft; how weary then shall it be to lie in the most painful fire so many thousands of years without number; and to be in that most horrible company of devils most terrible to behold, full of malice and cruelty?

O wretched and miserable creature that I am, I might so have lived and so ordered

my life by the help and grace of my Lord Christ Jesus, that this hour might have been unto me much joyous and greatly desired. Many blessed and holy saints were full joyous and desirous of this hour, for they knew well that by death their souls should be translated into a new life; to the life of all joy and endless pleasure, from the straits and bondage of this corruptible body into a very liberty and true freedom among the company of heaven, from the miseries and grievances of this wretched world, to be above with God in comfort inestimable that cannot be spoken nor thought. They were assured of the promises of Almighty God, which had so promised to all them that be His faithful servants ; and sure I am that if I had truly and faithfully served Him unto this hour, my soul had been partner of these promises.

But unhappy and ungracious creature that I am, I have been negligent in His service, and therefore now my heart doth waste in sorrows seeing the nighness of death, and considering my great sloth and negligence. I thought full little thus suddenly to have been trapped ; but, alas, now death hath prevented me, and hath unwarily attacked me and suddenly oppressed me with his mighty power, so

that I know not whither I may turn me for succour, nor where I may seek now for help, nor what thing I may do to get any remedy.

If I might have leisure and space to repent me and amend my life, not compelled with this sudden stroke but of my own free will and liberty, and partly for the love of God, putting aside all sloth and negligence, I might then safely die without any dread; I might then be glad to depart hence and leave my manifold miseries and encumbrances of this world. But how may I think that my repentance or mine amendment cometh now of mine own free will, since I was before this stroke so cold and dull in the service of my Lord God? Or how may I think that I do this more rather for His love than for fear of His punishment, when, if I had truly loved Him, I should more quickly and more diligently have served Him heretofore? Me seemeth now that I cast away my sloth and negligence, compelled by force. Even as a merchant that is compelled by a great tempest in the sea to cast his merchandise out of the ship, it is not to be supposed that he would cast away his riches of his own free will, not compelled by the storm. And even so likewise do I: if this tempest of death were not now raised upon me, it is full like that I would not

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have cast from me my sloth and negligence. O would to God that I might have now some farther respite, and some longer time to amend myself of my free will and liberty. O if I might entreat death to spare me for a season : but that will not be ; death in no wise will be entreated ; delay he will none take ; respite he will none give, if I would give him all the riches of this world; no, if all my lovers and friends would fall upon their knees and pray him for me. No, if I and they would weep (if it were so possible) as many tears as there be in the seas drops of water, no pity may restrain him. Alas, when opportunity of time was, I would not use it well, which, if I had done, it would now be unto me more precious than all the treasures of a realm. For then my soul as now should have been clothed with good works innumerable, the which should make me not to be ashamed when I should come to the presence of my Lord God, where now I shall appear laden with sin miserably, to my confusion and shame. But, alas, too negligently have I let pass from me my time, not regarding how precious it was, nor yet how much spiritual riches I might have got therein, if I would have put my diligence and study thereunto.

For assuredly no deed that is, be it never so little, but it shall be rewarded of Almighty God. One draught of water given for the love of God shall not be unrewarded, and what is more easy to be given than water? But not only deeds, but also the least words and thoughts shall be in like wise rewarded. O how many good thoughts, deeds, works, might one think, speak and do in one day? But how many more in one whole year? O alas, my great negligence! O alas, my foul blindness! O alas, my sinful madness that knew this well, and would not put it in effectual execution! O if now all the people of this world were present here to see and know the perilous condition that I am in, and how I am prevented by the stroke of death, I would exhort to take me as an example to them all, and while they have leisure and time, to order their lives and cast from them sloth and idleness, and to repent them of their misbehaviour towards God, and to bewail their offences, to multiply good works and to let no time pass by them unfruitfully. For if it shall please my Lord God that I might any longer live, I would otherwise exercise myself than I have done before. Now I wish that I may have time and space, but righteously I am denied, for when I might have had it I

would not well use it ; and, therefore, now when I would well use it, I shall not have it.

O ye, therefore, that have and may use this precious time in your liberty, employ it well, and be not too wasteful thereof, lest, peradventure, when you would have it, it shall be denied you likewise, as now it is to me. But now I repent me full sore of my great negligence, and right much I sorrow that so little I regarded the wealth and profit of my soul, but rather took heed to the vain comforts and pleasures of my wretched body. O corruptible body ! O stinking car-  
rion ! O rotten earth, to whom I have served, whose appetites I have followed, whose desire I have procured, now dost thou appear what thou art in thy own likeness ! That brightness of thy eyes, that quickness in hearing, that liveli-  
ness in thy other senses by natural warmness, thy swiftness and nimbleness, thy fairness and beauty ; all these thou hast not of thyself, they were but lent unto thee for a season, even as a wall of earth that is fair painted without for a season with fresh and goodly colours, and also gilded with gold, it appeareth goodly for the time to such as consider no deeper than the outward craft thereof ; but when at the last the colour faileth and the gilding falleth away, then appeareth it in his own likeness ; for then the

earth plainly showeth itself. In like wise my wretched body, for the time of youth it appear-  
eth fresh and lusty, and I was deceived with the outward beauty thereof, little considering what naughtiness was covered underneath ; but now it showeth itself.

Now my wretched body, thy beauty is faded, thy fairness is gone, thy lust, thy strength, thy loveliness all is gone, all is failed ; now art thou returned to thine own earthly colour ; now art thou black, cold and heavy, like a lump of earth ; thy sight is darkened, thy hearing is dulled, thy tongue faltereth in thy mouth, and corruption issueth out of every part of thee ; corruption was thy beginning in the womb of thy mother, and corruption is thy continuance. All things that ever thou receivest, were it never so precious, thou turnest into corruption ; and naught came from thee at any time but corruption, and now to corruption thyself returnest : altogether right vile and loathly art thou become, where in appearance before thou wast goodly : but the good lines was nothing else but as a painting or a gilding upon an earthen wall ; under it was covered with stinking and filthy matter. But I looked not so deep, I contented myself with the outward painting, and in that I took great pleasure ; for

all my study and care was about thee, either to apparel thee with some clothes of divers colours, either to satisfy thy desire in pleasant sights, in delectable hearings, in goodly smells, in sundry manner of tastings and touchings, either else to get thee ease and rest as well in sleep as otherwise. And I provided, therefore, pleasant and delectable lodgings, and to eschew tediousness in all these, not only lodgings, but also in apparel, meats and drinks procured many and divers changes, that when thou wast weary of one then mightest thou content thyself with some other. Oh, alas, this was my vain and naughty study whereunto my wit was ready applied, in those things I spent the most part of my days. And yet was I never content long, but murmuring or grudging every hour for one thing or other.

And what am I now the better for all this? What reward may I look for of all my long service? or what great benefits shall I receive for all my great study, care and diligence? Nothing better am I, but much the worse; much corruption and filth my soul thereby hath gathered, so that now it is made full horrible and loathly to behold. Reward get I none other than punishment, either in hell everlasting or at the least in

purgatory, if I may so easily escape. The benefits of my labour are the great cares and sorrows which I now am wrapped in. May not I think my wit to have been well occupied in this lewd \* and unfruitful business? Have I not well bestowed my labour about this service of my wretched body? Hath not my time been well employed in these miserable studies, whereof now no comfort remaineth, but only sorrow and repentance? Alas, I heard full often that such as should be damned should grievously repent themselves and take more displeasure of their misbehaviour than ever they had pleasure before. And yet that repentance then should stand them in no stead, where a full little repentance taken in time might have eased them of all their pains.

This I heard and read full often, but full little heed or regard I gave thereunto; I well perceived it in myself, but all too late, I dread me. I would that now, by the example of me, all others might beware, and avoid by the gracious help of God these dangers that I now am in, and prepare themselves against the hour of death better than I have prepared me. Alas, what availeth me now any delicacy of

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\* Light or frivolous.

meats and drinks which my wretched body insatiable did devour? What availeth my vanity or pride that I had in myself either of apparel or of any other thing belonging unto me? What availeth the filthy and unclean delights and lusts of the stinking flesh, wherein was appearance of much pleasure, but in very deed none other than the sow hath, waltering \* herself in the miry puddle? Now these pleasures be gone, my body is nothing better, my soul is much the worse, and nothing remaineth but sorrow and displeasure, and that a thousandfold more than ever I had any pleasure before.

O lewd body and naughty, which hast brought me to this utter discomfort; O dirty corruption; O sachell † full of dung, now must I go to make answer for thy lewdness; thy lewdness, I say, for it all cometh of thee. My soul had nothing need of such things as was thy desire: what need my soul that is immortal, either clothing, or meat or drink? What need it any corruptible gold and silver? What need it any houses or beds, or any other things that appertaineth to these? For thee, O corruptible body, which like a rotten wall daily needeth reparations and botching up with meat and

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\* Wallowing.      † Satchel or sack.

drink, and defence of clothing against cold and heat, was all this study and diligence taken, and yet now wilt thou forsake me at my most need, when account and reckoning of all our misdeeds must be given before the throne of the Judge most terrible. Now thou wilt refuse me and leave me to the jeopardy of all this matter.

O alas, many years of deliberation suffice not before so great a Judge to make answer, which\* shall examine me of every idle word that ever passed my mouth. O then how many idle words, how many evil thoughts, how many deeds have I to make answer for! and such as we set but at light, full greatly shall be weighed in the presence of His most high Majesty. O alas, what may I do to get some help at this most dangerous hour? Where may I seek for succour? Where may I resort for any comfort? My body forsaketh me, my pleasures be vanished away as the smoke, my goods will not go with me. All these worldly things I must leave behind me; if any comfort shall be, either it must be in the prayers of my friends, or in mine own good deeds that I have done before.

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\* Who.

But as for my good deeds that should be available in the sight of God, alas, they be few or none that I can think to be available; they must be done principally and purely for His love. But my deeds, when of their kind they were good, yet did I linger them by my folly; for either I did them for the pleasure of men, or to avoid the shame of the world, or else for my own affection, or else for dread of punishment; so that seldom I did any good deed in that purity and直ness that it ought of right to have been done. And my misdeeds, my lewd deeds that be shameful and abominable, be without number; not one day of all my life, no, not one hour I trow was so truly expended to the pleasure of God, but manydeeds, words and thoughts miscaped me in my life. Alas, little trust then may I have upon my deeds!

And as for the prayers of my friends such as I shall leave behind me, of them many peradventure be in the same need that I am in; so that where their own prayers might profit themselves, they cannot so profit another. And many of them will be full negligent, and some forgetful of me, and no marvel: for who should have been so friendly unto me than mine own self? Therefore I that was most bound to have done for myself, forget my own weal in my life-

time ; no marvel therefore if others do forget me after my departing hence. Other friends there be by whose prayers souls may be helped, as by the blessed and holy saints above in heaven, which verily will be mindful of such as in earth here have devoutly honoured them before. But, alas, I had special devotion but to a few, and yet them I have so faintly honoured, and to them so coldly sued for favour, that I am ashamed to ask aid or help of them. At this time indeed I had more effectually meant to have honoured them and more diligently to have commended my wretched soul unto their prayers, and so to have made them my special friends ; but now death hath prevented me so, that no other hope remaineth, but only in the mercy of my Lord God, to whose mercy I do now offer myself, beseeching Him not to look upon my deserts, but upon His infinite goodness and abundant pity.

Alas, my duty had been much better to have remembered this terrible hour ; I should have had this danger ever before my eyes ; I should have provided, therefore, so that now I might have been in a more readiness against the coming of death, which I knew assuredly would come at the last, albeit I knew not when, where, or by what manner ; but well

I knew every hour and moment was to him indifferent, and in his liberty. And yet (my madness ever to be sorrowed), notwithstanding this certainty of his coming, and the uncertainty of the time thereof, I made no certain nor sure provision against this hour. Full often I took great study and care to provide for little dangers, only because I thought they might hap, and yet happed they never a deal ; and but trifles they were in comparison of this. How much rather should I have taken study and care for this so great a danger which I knew well must necessarily fall unto me once. For this cannot be eschewed in no wise, and upon this I ought to have made good provision ; for in this hangeth all our wealth. For if a man die well, he shall after his death nothing want that he would desire, but his appetite shall be satiate in every point at the full ; and if he die amiss, no provision shall avail him that ever he made before.

This provision, therefore, is most effectually to be studied, since this alone may profit without other, and without this none can avail. O ye that have time and space to make your provision against the hour of death, defer not from day to day as I have done. For I often did think and purpose with myself that at some leisure I would have provided; nevertheless, for

every trifling business I put it aside, and delayed this provision always to another time, and promised with myself that at such a time I would not fail to do it ; but when that came another business arose, and so I deferred it again unto another time. And so, alas, from time to time, that now death in the meantime hath prevented me. My purpose was good, but it lacked execution ; my will was straight, but it was not effectual ; my mind well intended, but no fruit came thereof. All for because I delayed so often and never put in effect that that I had purposed ; and, therefore, delay it not as I have done, but before all other business put this first in surety, which ought to be chief and principal business. Neither building of colleges, nor making of sermons, nor giving of alms, neither yet any other manner of business shall help you without this.

Therefore, first and before all things, prepare for this ; delay not in any wise, for if you do you shall be deceived as I am now. I read of many, I have heard of many, I have known many that were disappointed as I am now. And ever I thought and said and intended that I would make sure and not be deceived by the sudden coming of death ; yet, nevertheless, I am now deceived, and am taken sleeping,

unprepared, and that when I least weened of his coming, and even when I reckoned myself to be in most health, and when I was most busy and in the midst of my matters. Therefore, delay not you any farther, nor put your trust overmuch in your friends ; trust yourself while ye have space and liberty, and do for yourself now while you may. I would advise you to do that thing that I, by the grace of my Lord God, would put in execution if His pleasure were to send me longer life. Account yourself as dead, and think that your souls were in prison of purgatory, and that there they must abide till that the ransom for them be truly paid, either by long sufferance of pain there, or else by suffrages done here in earth by some of your special friends. Be you your own friend ; do you these suffrages for your own soul, whether they be prayers or almsdeeds or any other penitential painfulness. If you will not effectually and heartily do these things for your own soul, look you never that others will do them for you, and in doing them in your own persons, they shall be more available to you a thousandfold than if they were done by any other. If you follow this counsel and do thereafter, you be gracious and blessed, you shall doubtless repent your follies, but too late.

# The Ways to Perfect Religion

Made by John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester,  
being Prisoner in the Tower of London



SISTER Elizabeth, gladly I would write unto you something that might be to the health of your soul and furtherance of it in holy religion. But well I know that without some fervour in the love of Christ, religion cannot be to you savoury, nor any work of goodness can be delectable, but every virtuous deed shall seem laborious and painful. For love maketh every work appear easy and pleasant, though it be right unpleasant of itself. And contrariwise right easy labour appeareth grievous and painful, when the soul of the person that doeth the deed hath no desire nor love in doing of it. This thing may well appear by the life of hunters, the which out of doubt is more laborious and painful than is the life of religious persons, and yet nothing sustaineth them in

their labour and pains but the earnest love and hearty desire to find their game. Regard no less my writing, good sister, though to my purpose I use the example of hunters, for all true Christian souls be called hunters, and their office and duty is to seek and hunt for to find Christ Jesu. And, therefore, Scripture in many places exhorteth us to seek after Him, and assureth that He will be found of them that diligently seek after Him—*Invenietur ab his qui quaerunt eum.* That is to say, He will be found of them that seek Him; well happy are all those that can find Him, or can have any scent of Him in this life here. For that scent, as St Paul saith, is the scent of the very life. And the devout souls, where they feel this scent, they run after Him apace—*Curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.* That is to say, we shall run after the scent of Thy sweet ointments. Seeing then all devout souls may be called hunters, I will further prosecute the comparison made before between the life of the hunters and the life of the religious persons after this manner.

## A Comparison between the Life of Hunters and the Life of Religious Persons

WHAT life is more painful and laborious of itself than is the life of hunters, which most early in the morning break their sleep and rise when others do take their rest and ease? And in his labour he may use no plain highways and the soft grass, but he must tread upon the fallows, run over the hedges and creep through the thick bushes, and cry all the long day upon his dogs, and so continue without meat or drink until the very night drive him home. These labours be unto him pleasant and joyous, for the desire and love that he hath to see the poor hare chased with dogs.

Verily, verily, if he were compelled to take upon him such labours, and not for this cause, he would soon be weary of them, thinking them full tedious unto him; neither would he rise out of his bed so soon, nor fast so long, nor endure these other labours, unless he had a very love therein. For the earnest desire of his mind is so fixed upon his game that all these pains be thought to him but very pleasures. And therefore I may well say that love is the

principal thing that maketh any work easy, though the work be right painful of itself, and that without love no labour can be comfortable to the doer. The love of his game delighteth him so much that he careth for no worldly honour, but is content with full simple and homely array. Also the goods of the world he seeketh not for, nor studieth how to attain them; for the love and desire of his game so greatly occupieth his mind and heart. The pleasures also of his flesh he forgetteth by weariness and wasting of his body in earnest labour. All his mind, all his soul, is busied to know where the poor hare may be found. Of that is his thought, and of that is his communication, and all his delight is to hear and speak of that matter, every other matter but this is tedious for him to give ear unto; in all other things he is dull and unlusty, in this only quick and stirring; for this also to be done, there is no office so humble, nor so vile, that he refuseth not to serve his own dogs himself, to bathe their feet and to anoint them where they be sore, yea, and to cleanse their stinking kennel, where they shall lie and rest them. Surely if religious persons had so earnest a mind and desire to the service of Christ as have these hunters to see a course at a hare,

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their life should be unto them a very joy and pleasure.

For what other be the pains of religion but these that I have spoken of? That is to say, much fasting, crying and coming to the choir, forsaking of worldly honours, worldly riches, fleshly pleasures and communication of the world, humble service and obedience to her sovereign,\* and charitable dealing to her sister; which pains in every point the hunter taketh and sustaineth more largely for the love that he hath to his game, than doeth many a religious person for the love of Christ. For albeit the religious person riseth at midnight, which is painful to her in very deed, yet she went before that to her bed at a convenient hour, and also cometh after to her bed again. But the hunter riseth early, and so continueth forth all the long day, no more returning to his bed until the very night, and yet peradventure he was late up the night before, and full often up all the long nights. And though the religious woman fast until it be noon, the which must be to her painful, the hunter yet taketh more pain, which fasteth until the very night, forgetting both meat and drink for the

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\* i.e., religious superior.

pleasure of his game. The religious woman singeth all the forenoon in the choir, and that also is laborious unto her, but yet the hunter singeth not, but he crieth, hallooeth and shouteth all the long day and hath more greater pains. The religious woman taketh much labour in coming to the choir and sitting there so long a season, but yet no doubt of it more labour taketh the hunter in running over the fallow, and leaping over the hedges, and creeping through the bushes than that can be. And would to God that in other things, that is to say, touching worldly honours, worldly riches, worldly pleasures—would to God that the religious persons many of them might profit as much in mindfulness in seeking of Christ, as the hunter doeth in seeking of his game, and yet all their comfort were to commune and speak of Christ, as the hunters have all their joy to speak of the poor hare, and of their hunting.

And furthermore, would to God the religious persons would content themselves with the humble service done to their sovereign, and with charitable behaviour unto their sisters, and with as good a heart and mind as the hunters acquit them to serve their hounds. I wot it is a thing much more reasonable to love

and serve reasonable creatures made to the image of Almighty God, rather than to love and serve dogs which be unreasonable creatures. And rather our duty were to speak of Christ, and of things belonging to His honour, than of the vain worldly matters which be but very trifles indeed. And also with more attentive mind we should seek after our Saviour Christ Jesu, to know our very comfort in Him —wherein resteth the great merit of our souls—than the hunters should seek after the hare, which when they have gotten they have no great gains thereby. But as I have said, the cause why so many religious persons so diligently pursue not the ways of religion as do the hunters, is the want of the observation of their game, which is nothing else but the lack of love. For verily, as I think, the earnest love and hearty desire of game maketh all labours and pains joyous unto the hunter. And if there were in religious persons as great favour and love to the service of God, as be in hunters to their game, all their life should be a very paradise and heavenly joy in this world. And contrariwise without this fervour of love it cannot be but painful, weary and tedious to them.

My purpose therefore, dear sister, is to minister unto you some common considera-

tions which if you will often resort unto by due remembrance and so by diligent prayer call upon Almighty God for His love, you shall now by His grace attain it.

### The First Consideration

THE first consideration may be this : First consider by your own mind and reason that Almighty God of His own singular goodness and free will did create you and make you of naught, whereunto He was not bound by any necessity, nor drawn by any commodity that might rise upon Him by your creation. No other thing moved Him but His very goodness and special favour that He bare unto you, long or ever He did make you. This, good sister, take for a very truth and firmly believe it, for so it is in very deed ; innumerable creatures, more than ever were made or ever shall be made, He might have made if it had been so pleasing unto Him. For how many, suppose you, married men and married women have been and shall be hereafter in this world, that never had nor never shall have any children, yet they full gladly would have had, and by possibility of nature might have had many, if it had so pleased Almighty God to have made and to have given unto them children. But all

those be left unmade, and amongst them He might have left you also unmade, and never have put His hand to the making of you if He had so would. Nevertheless, as I said, it pleased His goodness herein to prefer you of His special favour that He bore unto you, leaving unmade others more innumerable, electing you and appointing you to be made, refusing and setting apart all them which would, peradventure, have considered His special grace and favour more lovingly than you hitherto have done, and would have studied more for His pleasure and service than ever you did ; and you occupy the room and place that some of them might have occupied by like favour as Almighty God hath shewed unto you. Ah, dear sister, how much should this one consideration move you to the earnest love of this our so gracious a Lord, that thus hath appointed and chosen you to be His creature before so many others, where He might have taken any of them at His pleasure and repelled you and left you as naught without any manner of being !

### The Second Consideration

THE second consideration is this : Where there is many manner of beings, some creatures

have a goodly being, some have an ungodly being. It is a more goodly being margarite \* of a precious stone than of a pebble stone ; of the fair bright gold than of rusty iron ; of a goodly pheasant than of a venomous serpent ; of a pretty fawn than of a foul toad ; of a reasonable soul than of an unreasonable beast. And it is not to be doubted but Almighty God might have given to any of them what being soever He would, and might have transformed each of those into the nature and kind of any of the other at His pleasure and will. For of the stones He might make men, as in the Gospel our Saviour doth affirm : *Potens est Deus de lapidibus istis suscitare filios Abrahæ*, Almighty God hath the power to make of these stones the children of Abraham. And contrariwise He might of men have made stones, as the wife of Lot was turned into a salt stone. And in like wise me or you or any other man or woman, He might have made a stone, or a serpent, or a toad, for His pleasure. There is no creature so foul, so horrible, or so ungodly, but He might put you in the same condition that the most loathly of them be put in, and them, in contrariwise, He might have put in the same condition that you be in. Consider

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\* i.e., a pearl.

now, by your reason, that if you had been made in the likeness of an owl, or of an ape, or of a toad, how deformed you should have been, and in how wretched and miserable condition. And thank your Lord God that hath given you a more excellent nature, yea, such a nature as excelleth in nobleness, in dignity, all other bodily natures; for it is made to the very likeness and image of Almighty God, whereunto none other bodily creature doth reach near. Metals nor stones, be they never so precious, neither herbs nor trees, neither fishes nor fowls, neither any manner of beast, be they never so noble in their kind, doth attain to this high point of nobleness to have in them the image and likeness of Almighty God, but only man.

Forasmuch then as our Lord God might have given this excellent dignity to other innumerable creatures, as to beasts, to fowls, to fishes, to trees, to herbs, to metals, to stones, and hath not so done, but before all those hath elected and chosen you to bear His image and likeness and to be endued with a reasonable soul, how much should his loving dealing move you to enforce yourself with all the strength and power of your heart and mind to love Him therefore again.

### 'The Third Consideration

THE third consideration is this : That whereas, notwithstanding this great and excellent gift, you, nevertheless, by reason of original sin wherewith you were born of your mother into this world, had lost the great inheritance above in heaven and purchased everlasting imprisonment in hell, He of His great and singular goodness had provided you to be born within the precincts of Christendom, where you have been instructed in the doctrine of His faith and received the holy Sacrament of Baptism, and have been made a Christian woman, whereby you did receive again your inheritance before lost, and have escaped the most horrible danger of everlasting damnation. How many, suppose you, in all the world that be not instructed in this law and faith of Christ, nor have not received the holy Sacrament of Baptism, both noble men and women, both knights and princes, which have great wisdom and reason, and many such as, peradventure, if they were taught it, would more readily apply their minds to Christ's faith than you do, and more heartily serve Him, honour and love Him than ever you did ; and yet, lo ! thus graciously hath He

provided for you before all them, and hath appointed you to be a Christian woman and to be partaker of all those graces and benefits that belong unto the Christian people, which be so many and so great, that it passeth the wits of men, not only to number but also to think.

And here, good sister, do deeply consider in your soul how much this loving preferment of our Lord God should stir you to love Him again, when He suffereth so innumerable a multitude of men and women to perish and to be lost for ever, amongst whom many do pass you in all natural virtues, both of body and soul, and also would farther pass you in profiting in the law of Christ if they were received thereunto ; and yet, I say, He suffereth them to perish everlastinglly and perpetually to be damned ; and for your safeguard hath provided of His singular goodness and mercy towards you, for the which since it is not possible of your part to recompense, why shall you not with all your power enforce yourself to love His most gracious goodness again, and after your possibility to give unto Him most humble thanks therefor ?

### The Fourth Consideration

THE fourth consideration is this : That where, since that time of your Baptism and that you were made a Christian woman, you have many times unkindly fallen into deadly sin and broken His laws and commandments, setting at naught all those benefits which He before had given to you, following your wretched pleasure to the great displeasure and contempt of His Most High Majesty ; and yet He furthermore did not strike you, nor yet revenge Himself upon you rigorously, punishing the transgressors and breakers of His law as He might and should by His righteousness have done. But, contrariwise, He did long spare you by His excellent mercy, and mercifully He did abide your return to Him again by sorrowful repentance and asking of Him mercy for your abominable offences. And where you so did with good hearty mind at any time, He received you to His grace, and by the sacrament of penance you were taken into His favour again, and so yet escape the horrible pains of hell due for your outrageous unkindness. No reason may judge the contrary but that you of good right have deserved them for your foul pre-

sumption in breaking of the laws of your Lord God, and preferring your wretched appetites before His pleasure, and following your own wilful desires before His most high commandments. Alas, what miserable condition should you now have been in if He so incontinent after your offences had stricken you by death and had sent you to the horrible pains of hell, where you should not only for a time have bidden, but for ever and without all remedy. No prayers of your friends, no almsdeeds, no such other good works should have relieved you.

Ah, sister, imprint deeply in your soul this inestimable mercy of your Lord God showed unto you through His most gracious and merciful abiding for your return to Him by true repentance and asking of His mercy. For innumerable souls of men and women, for less offences than you have done, lie now in the prison of hell, and shall there continue without end ; which if they might have had as great sufferance as you have had, and so long leisure to repent them, they would have taken more sorrowful repentance than ever you took, and do now more sorrowfully repent than ever you did, but that as now cannot profit them, for that sorrow and repentance is now too late. But to my purpose, how may you think that

this loving sufferance and gracious abiding of your amendment and merciful accepting of your sorrows and repentance for your great sins, cometh not of a singular love showed unto you by your Lord God before all them? And shall not this consideration pierce your heart and move you much to love Him again?

### The Fifth Consideration

THE fifth consideration is this: Peradventure, after that thus by your repentance and asking mercy you were taken to this grace of your God, yet far more grievously and far more unkindly you fell again to sin, and kept not the purpose and promise that before you did make, but more without shame and dread of His highness took your liberty in your sinful ways, abusing His gentleness and presuming upon His mercy, not regarding any benefit or kindness showed by His most excellent goodness unto you before, so defiling your soul by innumerable ways, and making it filthy and more ungodly than is the sow that waltereth herself in the foul miry puddle, and more pestilently stinketh in the sight of God than is the stinking carrion of a dead dog being rotten and lying in a ditch; yet, nevertheless, for all these misbehaviours, your Lord God of His far-passing

goodness hath called you again from your sinful life and hath graciously stirred your soul to forsake your sin and to leave this wretched world and to enter the holy religion. Whereby (after the sentence of holy doctors) your soul is made as clean as it was at your baptism and restored again to the purity and cleanliness of your first innocence; and not only that, but also He hath appointed you to be of the number of them that He assigned for His best beloved spouses. And what high point of singular favour is this? How many women, far better than you, be left behind in this world, not called to this high dignity nor admitted to this most special grace? When the noble King Asuerus, as it is written in the Scripture, commanded many fair maidens to be chosen out and to be seen unto with all things that might make them fair and beautiful and pleasant to his sight, to the intent that they at all times when it should like him to appoint any of them to come to his presence and to be his spouse, they might be the more ready, this thing, no doubt of it, was to them that were thus chosen a comfort, that they were preferred before others, and also every one of them might live in hope to come to the king's presence and have some likelihood to be accepted for his spouse,

in so much that all others but they were excluded. In like manner it is with religious women. All they, by the gracious calling of the great King of heaven, be gathered into God's religion and dissevered from the other secular women that be of the world, there a season to abide until they be sufficiently prepared by the holy sacraments and the holy observations of religion to come to His gracious Highness's presence, and to be brought into His secret chamber above in heaven, there to abide with Him in endless joy and bliss. Blessed is that religious woman that so doth prepare herself for this little time that here she shall tarry by prayer, by meditation, by contemplation, by tears of devotion, by hearty love and burning desire, that after that this transitory life she may be admitted to the most excellent honour, and not with shame and rebuke be repelled therefrom when the day shall come.

### The Sixth Consideration

THE sixth consideration that you call well to your remembrance, who it is that doth thus exhort you for to love, verily He is that person that if either you will freely give your love, or else sell your love, He is most worthy to have

it above all other. First, if ye were of that mind to give your love free, it were good yet there to bestow it that you should choose such a one, as both in goodliness of person, as also in prowess and wisdom, and good gentle manners may be worthy of your love. For if there be any deformity in him whom you would love, it is an impediment and great let for to love him ; but in our Saviour Christ the Son of God is no deformity, for He is all goodly, and surmounteth all other in goodliness ; and, therefore, of Him the prophet David affirmeth in this manner : *Speciosus forma præ filiis hominum*, that is to say, "He is goodly before the children of men." And of truth much goodly must He needs be that hath so many goodly creatures. Behold the rose, the lily, the violet ; behold the peacocks, the pheasant, the popinjay ; behold all the other creatures of this world—all these were of His making, all their beauty and goodliness of Him they received it. Wherefore this goodliness describeth that He Himself must needs of necessity be very goodly and beautiful. And for that in the book of Canticles the Spouse describeth His goodliness, saying : *Dilectus meus candidus et rubicundus, electus ex millibus*, that is to say : "He that I love is white and red, chosen out amongst

thousands." And this beauty and goodliness is not mortal, it cannot fade nor perish as doeth the goodliness of other men, which like a flower to-day is fresh and lusty, and to-morrow with a little sickness is withered and vanisheth away. And yet it is sensible to the goodliness of man's nature, for the which also he is more naturally to be beloved of many. For likeness is the ground of love, like always doth covet like, and the nearer in likeness that any person be, the sooner they may be knit together in love. The same likeness He hath and you have, like body and like soul, touching His manhood ; your soul is also like unto Him in His Godhead, for after the image and similitude of it your soul is made. Furthermore of His might and power you may be likewise a certain season. He made this world by the only commandment of His mouth, and gave to the herbs and all other creatures their virtue and might that they have ; and may also by His power save and damn creatures, either to lift them up in body and soul into heaven above, or else to throw them down into ever-during pains of hell. If ye doubt of His wisdom, behold all this world, and consider how every creature is set with another, and every of them by himself, how the heavens are apparelled with stars, the air with fowls, the

water with fishes, the earth with herbs, trees and beasts, how the stars be clad with light, the fowls with feathers, the fishes with scales, the beasts with hair, herbs and trees with leaves, and flowers with scent, wherein doth well appear a great and marvellous wisdom of Him that made them. Finally His good and gentle manner is all full of pleasure and comfort so kind, so friendly, so liberal and beneficous, so piteous and merciful, so ready in all opportunities, so mindful and circumspect, so dulcet and sweet in communication. For as Scripture saith : *Non habet amaritudinem conversatio vel taedium convictus illius, sed laetitiam et gaudium*, that is to say : " His manners be so sweet and pleasant that the conversation of Him hath no bitterness ; yea, His company hath no loathsomeness nor weariness in it, but all gladness and joy." Here peradventure you will say unto me, how may I love that I see not ? if I might see Him with all the conditions ye speak of, I could with all my heart love Him. Ah ! good sister, that time is not come yet ; you must, as I said, now for the time prepare yourself in cleanness of body and soul, against that time ; so when that time cometh you may be able and worthy to see Him, or else you shall be excluded from Him with the unwise virgins, of whom the Gospel telleth that

they were shut out from His presence with great shame and confusion, because they had not sufficiently prepared themselves. Therefore, good sister, for this time be not negligent to prepare yourself with all good works, that then you may be admitted to come unto His presence, from the which to be excluded it shall be a more grievous pain than any pain of hell. For, as Chrysostom saith : \* *Si decem mille gehennas quis dixerit, nihil tale est quale ab illa beata visione excidere*, that is to say : “ If one would rehearse unto me ten thousand hells, yet all that should not be so great pains as it is to be excluded from the blessed sight of the face of Christ.”

### The Seventh Consideration

The seventh consideration is this : where now it appeareth unto you, that if you will give your love freely, there is none so worthy to have it as Jesus the Son of the Virgin Mary. I will further shew unto you that if you will not freely give it, but you will look peradventure to have something again, yet there is none so well worthy to have it as He is ; for if another will give more for it than He, I will not be against it ; take your advantage. But sure I

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\* S. Chrys. in ep. Philipp, c.4, hom. 13 4, p. 302bc.

am there is none other to whom your love is so dear, and of so great a price as it is unto Him, nor any that will come nigh unto that that He hath given or will give. If His benefits and kindness shewed towards you, whereof I spake somewhat before, were by you well pondered, they be no small benefits, and especially the love of so great a prince, and that He would thus love you, and prefer you before so many innumerable creatures of His, and that when there was in you no love, and when you could not skill of love ; yea, and that, that more is, when you were enemy unto Him, yet He loved you, and so wonderfully that for your love, and to wash you from sin, and to deliver your soul from the extreme peril, He shed His most precious blood, and suffered the most shameful, the most cruel and the most painful death of the cross ; His head to be pierced with thorns, His hands and feet to be through holed with nails, His side to be lanced with a spear, and all His most tender body to be torn and rent with whips and scourges. Believe this for a very truth, good sister, that for your sake He suffered all, as if there had been no more in all the world but only yourself, which I will declare more largely unto you in the next consideration following.

Believe it in the meantime certainly, for so it is indeed, and if you believe it not, you do a great injury and shew a full unkindness unto Him that thus much hath done for you.

And if this belief truly settle in your heart, it is to me a marvel if you can content your heart without the love of Him, of Him, I say, that thus dearly hath loved you, and doth love you still. For what other lover will do thus much for your love? What creature in all the world will die for your sake? What one person will part with one drop of his heart blood for your sake? When then the Son of God, the Prince of heaven, the Lord of Angels, hath done this for your sake, which thing no other creature will do, what frost could have congealed your heart that it may not relent against so great an heat of love? If He, so excellent in all nobleness, should have given you but one favourable countenance from the heavens above, it had been a more precious benefit than ever you could recompense by your love again. It were impossible for your love to recompense that one thing. But how much rather when He hath descended into this wretched world for your sake, and here hath become man, and hath endured all misery pertaining unto man, save only sin and ignorance, and finally hath

suffered this great horrible death for your love, how shall you ever now recompense this by any love or service to be done for your pity? And He hath not only done all this for your sake, but also hath prepared for you after this transitory life a reward above in heaven, so great that never mortal eye saw the like, nor any tongue can express, nor yet any heart can think. Ah, sister, when your wretched soul shall hence depart, which cannot be very long here, who shall give you refreshing the space of one hour? Good therefore it is that you look unto yourself and upon Him bestow your love, the which hitherto hath done most for you and best hath deserved it beyond all other; and yet after this life He will give for it a reward so inestimable that it shall never fail you.

### The Eighth Consideration

THE eighth consideration is this: that albeit, there are many others which also are beloved of Christ Jesu, yet the love that He sheweth to them, nothing minisheth His love towards you, as if there were no more beloved of Him in all the kind of man. This may evidently be shewed unto you by this example following. If before any image of our Saviour were disposed and set in a long row many glasses, some great

and some little, some high and some low, a convenient distance from the image, so that every one of them might receive a presentment of the image, it is no doubt but in every one of these glasses should appear the very likeness of the same image. I will not say but this likeness should be longer in the great glasses than in the less, and clearer in the better cleansed glasses, and in them that were nigh unto the image, than in the others that were not so well cleansed and much farther off. But as to the likeness itself it shall be as full and as whole in every one glass as though there were but one.

Now to my purpose, if you consider likewise that all the good souls that be scoured from deadly sin be in the manner of glasses set in an order to receive the love of our Saviour Christ Jesu, such souls as by true penance doing, by sighing, by weeping, by praying, by watching, by fasting and by other like, be the better scoured and cleansed from the spots and malice of deadly sin, they be the brighter glasses and more clearly receive this love, and such also be near unto our Saviour, for nothing putteth us far from Him but only sin. And therefore they that have more diligently scoured their souls from the rust of sin be nearer unto

Him than the others that so have not done. Such souls also as of their part enforce themselves to a great love and to a more ample fervour, they do enlarge the capacity of their souls to receive a more large abundance of love; again, those that less enforce them, have a less capacity in receiving, and therefore so much the less they receive of this love, even as a man that openeth his bosom wide and enlargeth it, is more able to receive a greater thing into it than he that doeth not.

But yet, as I have said before of the glasses, every one of the souls receives as full and as whole a love of Jesu Christ as though there were no more souls in all the world but that one alone, for the love of Christ Jesus [is] infinite. And therefore when innumerable of souls have every one of them received as much the love of Christ Jesu as to every one of them is possible, yet hath He still in Himself love sufficient for infinite more, and this His love thereby is not in any point diminished nor lessened, though it be divided into many, be the number of them never so great. None of them that be beloved receive the less because of the multitude of his fellows, nor if he had no more but himself he should not thereby have any more abundance of love to his part, but according to

the cleansing and capacity of his soul and nighness unto Christ, his part in love shall be the less or more. Wherefore, good sister, I pray you be diligent to scour your soul clean, and to enforce your soul on your part fervently to love your spouse Christ Jesu, and draw nigh unto Him with entire devotion, and then undoubtedly you shall be partner to the more plenteous abundance of His love, notwithstanding any other multitude which beside is beloved of Him; for He nevertheless is as studious of you and as mindful and as fervently careth for your weal as though there were no more beloved of Him but you alone in all this world.

### The Ninth Consideration

THE ninth consideration is this: where peradventure you would object to me again and say: "Brother, if it be thus as you say, that my Lord Jesu loveth me so much, and is so mindful of me, and so fervently intendeth my weal, what need me to care whatsoever I do? He will not cast me away; He will not forsake me nor suffer me to perish." Good sister, without doubt as I have said, our Saviour Christ Jesu is in love towards you, and He is mindful and more loving towards you than I can express.

And sure you may be that He will never cast you away, nor forsake you, if you before cast not yourself away, nor forsake yourself. But if you give any place to sin in your soul, and suffer it to enter upon you, verily then you forsake yourself and cast yourself away, and willingly destroy yourself, that is your deed and not His ; for He never forsaketh any creature unless they before have forsaken themselves. And if they will forsake themselves, were they never in so great favour with Him before, they then incontinently lose His favour. The which thing well appeareth in His first spiritual creatures the noble angels, Lucifer and his company, which were created in excellent brightness, and were much in the favour of Almighty God, they presumptuously offended Him in pride ; for the which not only they lost His favour, but also their marvellous brightness became incontinently horrible, foul, and were expelled out of the glorious kingdom of heaven that they were in, and thrown into perpetual darkness, into the prison of hell.

The first man Adam also, who was created in singular honour, and was put into paradise, a place full of gladness, there to live in comfort of all pleasure, the which was done to him for a singular love that Almighty God had towards

him ; yet anon as he fell to sin he was in like manner expelled out from that pleasure, and sent into this miserable world to endure misery and pain.

If those noble creatures which were lifted up into so great favour with Almighty God, so lightly by their misdemeanour in sin lost His gracious favour, let none other creature think but if they admit any sin to their soul, they shall be likewise excluded out of His favour. For sin is so odious unto Almighty God, that not the dearest friends that ever He had in all the world, but if there were found in their souls any deadly sin after death, they should never be received into the joy of heaven. Not the blessed Mary Magdalene for all her love towards Him, nor yet His own blessed Mother that bare Him into this world, if one deadly sin were found in their souls, they should incontinent be thrown into the dark dungeon of hell. Wherefore, good sister, say not, if His love be so much upon you, and He so desirously intendeth your profit, that you may do what you list, you need not to care what you do ; but contrariwise, the more that He loveth you, the more you should take heed unto yourself and beware that you offend Him not, for so did the Blessed Mary Magdalene, of whom

I spake before. She, notwithstanding the great love that both our Saviour had to her and she unto Him again, for the which also her sins were forgiven her, yet after His death she fled from the company of men, and lived in the wilderness far from any worldly comfort, in great wailing, fasting and prayer and such other painfulness of her body, and was nothing the less diligent to keep herself warily from sin, for the great love that our Lord and Saviour had to her; but for that the more studiously she did avoid and eschew everything whereby she might run into any displeasure against Him.

### The Tenth Consideration

THE tenth consideration is this: it were well done, and much it should further this cause if you truly esteem of how little value your love is, how vain, how light and how trifling a thing it is, and how few there be that would much regard it or set much price thereby, for few there be or none to whom it may do any profit or avail. Contrariwise, you should consider the love of your spouse, the sweet Jesu, how excellent it is, how sure, how fast, how constantly abiding, how many have much specially regarded it. Martyrs innumerable, both men and women, for His love have shed their blood and have en-

dured every kind of martyrdom, were it never so cruel, were it never so terrible. No pain, no torment, might compel them to forsake His love; so desirous were they of His love that rather than they would forego it, they gave no force of the loss of all this world beside, and their own life also. So dear and precious was that love to them that all the honours, pleasures and possessions of this life they accounted as very trifles in comparison of that. And what be you in comparison of them, but naughty, wretched and miserable? Where then they, which be now glorious saints above in heaven, so much have valued and so greatly esteemed this most excellent love, and you may have the same love for yours, that is so naughty and so little worth, what should you do of your part? How much should you enforce yourself not only to obtain this love, but studiously to keep it, since that you have it once, and for nothing to depart therefrom! He of His goodness doth not repel any creature from His love, but permitteth them assuredly that if any draw nigh unto Him by love, He will love them again, and give His most precious love for theirs. He sayeth: *Ego diligentes me diligo*; that is to say: "I love them that love Me." And in another place: *En qui venit ad me non ejiciam foras*;

that is to say: "What person soever cometh unto Me, I will not cast him away." Sister, if you consider this deeply, it should move you to fall down upon your knees and with all your heart and mind say unto your Spouse in this manner:

"O my blessed Saviour Lord Jesu, Thou askest my love, Thou desirest to have my heart, and for my love Thou wilt give me Thy love again. O my sweet Lord, what is this for Thee to desire, which art so excellent? If my poor heart were of so much value as all the hearts of men and women that ever were, if they were put together in one; and if it were as precious and noble as there is price and nobleness in all the orders of angels; if furthermore it did contain in it all bodily and spiritual treasure that is within the compass of heaven or without, yet it were but a little gift to give unto so great a Lord, for His most delicate and precious love to be had of Him again: much rather my love and heart, as it is now naughty, wretched and miserable, so is it but a small gift and of little value. Nevertheless, such as it is, since it is Thy pleasure to have it and Thy goodness doth ask it of me, saying: *Praebe mihi cor tuum*; that is to say: 'Give me thy heart'—I freely give it unto Thee, and I most humbly beseech

Thy goodness and mercy to accept it, and so to order me by Thy grace, that I may receive into it the love of nothing contrary to Thy pleasure, but that I always may keep the fire of Thy love, avoiding from it all other contrary love that may in any wise displease Thee."

### The Final Conclusion of All

Now then, good sister, I trust that these considerations, if you often read them with good deliberation, and truly imprint them in your remembrance, they will somewhat inflame your heart with the love of Christ Jesu, and that love once established in you all the other points and ceremonies of your religion shall be easy unto you, and no wit painful; you shall then comfortably do everything that to good religion appertaineth, without any great weariness. Nevertheless, if it so fortune that you at any time begin to feel any dulness of mind, quicken it again by the meditation of death, which I send you here before, or else by some effectual prayer earnestly calling for help and succour upon the most sweet Jesu, thinking, as it is indeed, that is your necessity and that no where else you can have any help but of Him. And if you will use these short prayers following, for every day in the week one, I think it shall be

unto you profitable. For thus you may in your heart shortly pray, what company soever you be amongst.

### The Prayers be these :

O BLESSED Jesu, make me to love Thee entirely.

O blessed Jesu, I would fain, but without Thy help I cannot.

O blessed Jesu, let me deeply consider the greatness of Thy love towards me.

O blessed Jesu, give unto me grace heartily to thank Thee for Thy benefits.

O blessed Jesu, give me good will to serve Thee, and to suffer.

O sweet Jesu, give me a natural remembrance of Thy passion.

O sweet Jesu, possess my heart, hold and keep it only to Thee.

These short prayers if you will often say, and with all the power of your soul and heart, they shall marvellously kindle in you this love, so that it shall be always fervent and quick, the which is my especial desire to know in you. For nothing may be to my comfort more than to hear of your furtherance and profiting in God and in good religion, the which our blessed Lord grant you for His great mercy. Amen.



# A Sermon

Verie fruitfull, godly, and learned, upon thys sentence of the Prophet Ezechiell, "Lamentationes, Carmen, et vae," very aptely applyed unto the passion of Christ: Preached upon a good Friday, by the same John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester



THE Prophet Ezechiel telleth that he saw a book spread before him, the which was written both within and without, and there was written also in it, "Lamentationes, Carmen, et vae," that is to say: "Lamentation, song and woe." This was a wonderful book and much to be marvelled upon. Much comfortable knowledge and sweetness this Prophet got by this book (as he saith in the chapter next ensuing, *Factum est in ore meo sicut mel dulce*—"This book was in my mouth as sweet as honey.") This book to our purpose may be taken unto us, the Crucifix, the which doubtless is a marvellous book, as we shall shew hereafter.

In the which if we do exercise our admiration, we shall come to wonderful knowledge.

Marvelling was the cause why that the philosophers came to so great knowledge as they had. They beheld and saw many wonderful things and effects in this world, as the marvellous earthquakes, thunders, lightnings, snow, rain and frost, blazing stars, the eclipses of the sun and of the moon, and such other effects. And those marvellous wonders moved them to search for the causes of the same. And so by diligent search and inquisition they came to great knowledge and cunning, which cunning men call philosophy natural. But there is another higher philosophy which is above nature, which is also gotten with marvelling, and this is the very philosophy of Christian people. And doubtless amongst all other things concerning a Christian man, it is a thing much marvellous, and most wonderful, that the Son of God, for the love that He had unto the soul of man, would suffer Himself to be crucified, and so to take upon Him that most painful death upon the Cross. Of this the prophet Habacuc sayeth : *Admiramini et obstupescite, quia opus factum est in diebus vestris quod nemo credet quum narrabitur* — “Marvel and wonder you, for a work is done in your days, which when it shall be shewed, no man will believe.”

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that

is most to be dreaded and feared, would be in so much fear that for very fear and dread of pain He had to suffer, He sweat water and blood?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that was most inestimable in price, and most precious, would suffer His body to be sold for so little a price as for the value of thirty pence?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that is the Lord of heaven and earth and all other creatures, would suffer Himself to be bound of those villains with ropes like a thief?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that hath so great might and power would suffer Himself to be taken of His cruel and mortal enemies, and so led unto all these pains?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that is the Judge of all the world would thus wrongfully be judged?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that had in Him all wisdom would thus be mocked and reputed as a fool?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that is so strong and mighty would be made so weak and feeble that He fell under the weight and burthen of the Cross?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that is the Lord of Angels would be spitted and

bobbed of a sort of lorels \* in that most despiteful manner?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that is the King of everlasting glory would suffer His head in mockery to be crowned with thorns?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that giveth life to every creature would suffer this most shameful, sorrowful and so painful death?

Is it not a wonderful thing that He that is the Lord and author of all liberty would thus be bound with ropes and nailed hand and foot unto the Cross?

Thus who that list with a meek heart and a true faith to muse and to marvel of this most wonderful book (I say of the Crucifix), he shall come to more fruitful knowledge than many other which daily study upon their common books. This book may suffice for the study of a true Christian man all the days of his life. In this book he may find all things that be necessary to the health of his soul. St Francis could pass his time with this book and was never weary thereof, and his great study was in the compass of a few words, *Quis tu, et quis ego, Domine?* that is to say, "Who art Thou, Lord,

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\* Low, worthless fellows.

and who am I?" This thought always did run from himself to Christ, and again from Christ unto himself. And so ever he marvelled of the most excellent nobleness of Christ, and compared it with his own naughtiness, always marvelling that Christ, being of so incomparable worthiness, would suffer that most painful death for so unworthy sinners; which lesson is so plain and so common that every man, be he never so simple, may somewhat profit in it. And, again, it is so high that few can attain to reach to the special fruit of it. This holy St Francis so profited in this lesson that it caused in his heart such a fervent love, such a devotion, such an affection to Christ, that the capital wounds which he beheld in the hands and feet and side of Christ were by miracle imprinted in his own hands and feet. This thing the Bishop of Rome, Innocent,\* and his cardinals did see, and had very proof thereof.

The meditation and imagination of this book was so earnest and so continual that the

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\* Pope Innocent III. is here referred to. This statement of Fisher is not quite accurate, as the date of the Stigmata is commonly fixed about the year 1224 and Innocent died in 1216. Alexander IV. was the Pope who saw the Stigmata in St Francis' lifetime. St Bonaventure assures us that he had this information from Alexander's own lips.

tokens of the five wounds of Christ were imprinted and engraved in this holy saint's body. But to this high fruit (as I said) few or none besides him doth attain. It is a singular gift of Almighty God, and not common to be looked for of other persons. Nevertheless, who that will exercise this lesson, though he come not to this high point of perfection, he shall, nevertheless, greatly profit in the same and come to a great knowledge, both of Christ and of himself. A man may easily say and think with himself (beholding in his heart the image of the Crucifix): "Who art Thou, and who am I?" Thus every person, both rich and poor, may think, not only in the Church here, but in every other place, and in his business whereabout he goeth. Thus the poor labourer may think, when he is at plough earing \* his ground, and when he goeth to his pastures to see his cattle, or when he is sitting at home by his fire-side, or else when he lieth in his bed waking and cannot sleep. Likewise the rich man may do in his business that concerneth him. And the poor women also in their business, when they be spinning of their rocks † or serving of

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\* Tilling.

† The rock was a staff held in the hand, from which the wool was spun, by turning a ball below.

their pullen.\* The rich women also in every lawful occupation that they have to do. It is an easy thing for any man or woman to make these two questions with themselves : "O my Lord, that wouldest die for me upon a cross, how noble and excellent art Thou !" and again, "How wretched and miserable am I !" Doubtless, O thou Christian soul, He that hung for thy sake on the cross was verily the Son of God, as the noble centurion said when, at the death of Christ, he saw so many wonderful tokens ; he saw the sun withdraw his light, and the air in darkness, and felt all the earth tremble and quake and the stones break asunder, then he said : *Vere Filius Dei erat iste*, that is to say, "Verily this person was the Son of God." Think with thyself, O Christian soul, how great a person He is that is the Son of God. And think again how villainous and how wretched thou art in comparison of Him. What art thou but ashes ? *cinis es*, and unto ashes thou shalt return, *et in cinerem reverteris*. Abraham, who was a man of high perfection, yet when he should speak unto Almighty God he said : *Quum sum pulvis et cinis, loquar ad Dominum*, that is to say, "I am but dust and ashes, and yet I must speak unto my Lord." David also

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\* i.e., poultry.

saith: *Universa vanitas omnis homo vivens*, that is to say, "Man containeth in him all vanity." Furthermore, Job speaketh of man, saying in this manner: *Qui quasi flos egreditur, et conteritur, et fugit velut umbra*—"Man is like a flower, he doth issue forth into the world, and soon after he is trodden down, and so, finally, he passeth like a shadow." Man is but earth and ashes, and shall pass away like a shadow and like a mere vanity.

Contrariwise, Christ was, is, and ever shall be, the Prince of heaven, the Lord of angels and the Creator of all creatures. *Qui fecit cælum et terram et omnia quæ in eis sunt*—He made heaven and earth and all that is in them. His power is infinite and most to be dreaded—*Omnipotens rex et metuendus nimis*. His wisdom is incomprehensible—*O altitudo divitiarum sapientiæ et scientiæ Dei*. His greatness passeth all measure—*Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis, et magnitudinis ejus non est finis*. Shortly to say, when a man hath spoken or thought all that can be to the praise of His excellency, yet He doth far pass and surmount all that, as the Scripture saith: *Glorificantes Dominum, quantumcumque poteritis, supervalebit adhuc, et admirabilis magnificentia illius*.

Now then, O thou sinful creature, marvel at

His excellent worthiness, that was thus crucified. And marvel also at thy naughtiness, for whose love He was thus crucified. Thus, I say, did the holy St Francis : *Quis es tu, et quis sum ego, Domine?*—“Who art Thou, my Lord so excellent, and who am I, for whom Thou wouldest endure all this pain?”

O Christian soul, often behold this book and say with this holy man : *Quis es tu, et quis sum ego?* Marvel that His inestimable goodness would thus die for so miserable a vanity. And so marvelling, thou shalt profit in a gracious knowledge of Christ, and thy heart shall taste marvellous sweetness and be replenished with a devout savour of His most excellent goodness. But you marvel, peradventure, why I call the Crucifix a book? I will now tell you the consideration why. A book hath boards, leaves, lines, writings, letters, both small and great. First, I say, that a book hath two boards : the two boards of this book are the two parts of the cross, for when the book is opened and spread, the leaves be couched upon the boards. And so the blessed body of Christ was spread upon the cross.

The leaves of this book be the arms, the hands, legs and feet, with the other members of His most precious and blessed body.

Never any parchment skin was more straightly stretched by strength upon the tentors than was this blessed body upon the cross. These lorells that crucified Him drew by violence His most precious arms with ropes unto either branch of the cross, that the sinews burst asunder, and so nailed His hands fast with spiking nails of iron unto the cross. After they stretched His feet likewise unto another hole beneath in the cross, and there nailed them with the third nail through both His feet. And so they reared up this body aloft against the sun, even as a parchment skin is set forth before the heat of the sun to dry. It was set up aloft to the intent that all the world might look upon this book.

This book was written within and without. First, within was written but one word ; nevertheless this one word compriseth in it, as saith St Paul, the whole treasure of all cunning and wisdom pertaining unto God, *In quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae Dei*—“In whom are all the treasures of the wisdom of God.” Of this word St John speaketh, saying : *In principio erat Verbum*—“The Word was in the beginning, before all creatures.” This Word is the second Person in the Godhead, the Son of God, which by the Holy Ghost was written in the inward side of

this parchment. For the Godhead of Christ was covered and hidden under the likeness of man. The Holy Ghost was the pen of Almighty God the Father; He set His most mighty word unto the body of Christ within the womb of the Virgin Mary, and so this book was written within.

For as St Paul sayeth : *Si cognovissent, numquam Dominum gloriae crucifixissent*, that is to say, "If they had known the Son of God, which was and is the Lord of everlasting glory, they would never have crucified Him." They saw His manhood which was in outward sight, but they saw not His Godhead, which was covered within the same. The Godhead was the inward side, and the manhood was the outward side. Furthermore, when a book is spread, you see that in the leaves are many lines drawn. And many letters, some red, some black and some blue; so in this book (the most blessed body of Christ) were drawn many lines, for it was all scourged with whips, so that everywhere the print of the cords of the scourges was left behind, and that in every place, from the neck downward unto the soles of His feet, so that there was no margin left in all this book, there was no void place, but everywhere it was either drawn with lines or else written with

letters ; for these scourges filled not only His most precious body with lines drawn everywhere, but also left many small letters, some black, some blue, some red. For the blood, by the violence of the scourges, sprung out in every place. And for because no part of this book should be unwritten, His head also was pierced with sharp thorns.

These cruel Jews put upon His head a crown of thorns, and pressed it down upon the same as hard as they might press it by violence, beating it down with a strong reed. *Et arundine percutiebant caput ejus.* And His blessed head so crowned, they did beat it down with a gadde or a hard reed.

Thus you perceive that this book was full of lines and small letters (which were of divers colours, as I said), some black, some blue, some red, some bluish, that is to say, full of strokes and lashes, whereby the skin was torn and rent in a thousand places. Besides these small letters yet was there also great capital letters preciously illumined with roset colour ; roset is a red colour like unto the colour of a rose, which colour that most precious blood which issued out of His hands and feet doth represent unto us ; with this most precious blood was illumined the five great capital letters in

this wonderful book. I mean by these capital letters the great wounds of His body, in His hands, and in His feet, and in His side.

These five great wounds were engraved with sharp and violent pens, that is to say, the sharp nails and the spear. And they do represent unto us the five capital letters of this book. Thus then you may perceive what be the boards of this book, and what be the leaves; how it is written within and without; how it is lined and leathered, and what be the letters, as well the small as the great. Now we shall hear what manner of writing is contained in this book. But first here let us make our prayer for grace, beseeching Almighty God to give unto our hearts the gracious light of His beams, whereby we may the more clearly perceive the writings of this book, and that they may bring forth some good fruit to our souls' health.

Now you shall hear what writings be contained in this book. In the book which Ezechiel did see, were written three manner of things: *Lamentationes, Carmen, et vae*, which is to say, lamentations, songs and woe. And the same three things in like manner are written in this book of the Crucifix. First is lamentation, and this very conveniently is written in this book of

the Crucifix. For whosoever will joy with Christ must first sorrow with Him. And by sorrow and lamentation he may come unto joy ; but he that will not sorrow and lament with Christ here in this life, he shall come finally to the place where is everlasting woe, I say woe that shall never have end. Here therefore is written all these three, lamentation, song and woe.

First then we will speak of lamentation. Lamentation ariseth of four affections, either of a great fear or dread, or of a great shame, or of some sorrow, or else of some hatred. When Holophernes with a mighty power was entered into the country of Jewry, and terribly threatened to destroy all before him, the people were in a great fear and dread to be oppressed, and so fell down before Almighty God, and with great lamentation did call for His help. *Omnis populus cecidit in faciem, adorantes Dominum cum lamentatione et fletu*—“ All the people fell on their faces, worshipping our Lord with weeping and lamentation.”

The cause of this lamentation was the great dread which they were in. Here first then let us learn to dread ; and doubtless, thou Christian soul, thou mayest here learn greater matter of dread than the Jews then were in ; for the Jews

then were only in peril of temporal death, thou art in peril of everlasting death.

Consider, man, how grievously thou hast sinned ; and also behold how grievously sin was revenged and punished in the blessed body of Christ. And thou shalt anon find here great cause and matter of dread. The stories telleth of Cambyses the King of Persia, that where one of his judges had given a false and a wrong judgement, he deprived him of his office, and made another in his place their judge after him. Furthermore, because of his falsehood he caused him to be slain, and his skin to be hanged up before the place of the common judgement, to the intent that this new judge, beholding the grievous punishment of his predecessor, might beware of falsehood, and always dread to give any wrong judgement. In like manner the image of the Crucifix is hung up in every church to the intent that we may see how grievously sin was punished in that most blessed body of our Saviour Christ Jesu : not for Himself, nor for His own sin, but for ours was He thus cruelly treated : we were the cause, we committed the sin. But yet nevertheless He bare the pains and burthens of our sins upon His back.

As writeth St Peter : *Peccata nostra ipse pertulit*

*in corpore suo super lignum crucis.* And therefore when we behold the image of the Crucifix in any place set up, we should think how grievously sin was punished in the body of our Saviour Christ. And thereby learn to dread the grievous punishment of sin. Alas, man, thinkest thou not that this was matter of dread? This I say, that the very Son of God was for thy sin put unto this cruel death of the cross: if thou believe not this, thou art worse than the devils. For, as St James sayeth, *daemones credunt et contremiscunt*, "The devils do believe and tremble." And if thou verily believe it, thou mayest thereby think and learn how much our Saviour and His Father both do hate sin. For sith Almighty God the Father would give His most dearly beloved Son unto such an horrible death, only for to quench and to extinguish sin, thou mayest be sure that He hateth sin very much.

Our Saviour also must needs hate sin, when He rather would suffer this most villainous death than that sin should have dominion upon our souls. Seeing then that thou knowest that both they hate sin, how shouldest thou dread to receive any sin into thy soul? If sin were so unpleasant to Almighty God the Father that rather than He would suffer it, He would give

His own Son unto death for the expulsion of it ; how much rather now doth it displease Him, when His Son hath suffered death therefor, and yet sin reigneth nevertheless, and more generally than ever it did before.

Furthermore, if sin was so grievously punished in Him that never did sin, how bitterly shall it be punished in thee, O sinful creature, the which hast done so many great outrageous sins ? Surely where He hath one nail in His hands and feet, thou sinful creature hast deserved one hundred. And for every one thorn that He suffered in His head, thou hast deserved a thousand. And for every one lash that He felt of the scourges, thou art worthy to have innumerable.

Who that deeply considereth this that I have said, and with an earnest study resorteth often to look upon this book, I marvel if he do not find herein great cause and earnest matter of dread.

Here also may every sinner quicken his sin, if any lie within his breast, for it is marvel that a sinner can without shame behold this blessed image. If a sinner call to remembrance his great unkindness, and repute the same unkindness any manner of vice, I trow that he will be much ashamed of his most unkind and ungentele dealing against so loving a Lord.

Say to me, thou sinful creature, wilt thou

not look that other men, when thou hast been unto them in anything beneficial, I say, wilt thou not look that they shall be kind and loving unto thee again? And if any person be unkind unto thee, wilt thou not rebuke him fully, and lay it unto his reproof to make him ashamed thereof? I am sure that thou wilt. Now then let me see, where is thy shame? Behold and view every part of this blessed body ; what pain it endured for thy sake !

Seest thou not His eyes, how they be filled with blood and bitter tears ?

Seest thou not His ears, how they be filled with blasphemous rebukes and opprobrious words ?

His cheek and neck with buffets, His shoulders with the burthen of the cross ?

Seest thou not His mouth, how in His dryness they would have filled it with asell \* and gall ?

Seest thou not how His back is pained against the hard cross ?

Seest thou not His sides, how they were scourged with sharp whips ?

Seest thou not His arms, how they were strained by the violence of the ropes ?

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\* i.e., vinegar.

Seest thou not His hands, how they be nailed just unto the cross?

Seest thou not His legs, how they be wearied with labour?

Seest thou not His feet, how painfully they stay and bear up the weight of His whole body?

O most unkind sinner, all this He suffered for thy sake. No greater kindness ever was or could be shewed to thee by any creature than this, which sweet Jesus did show for thee and for thy sake, and where is now thy kindness again?

No kindness thou canst shew, but much unkindness thou hast often shewed unto Him, and yet thou art not ashamed. Alas! man, where is thy shame? Think with thyself how many abominable sins thou hast done against His pleasure. I do ascertain thee that the least of them striketh Him more painfully unto the heart than any unkindness that ever was done unto thee in all thy life.

For, as St Bernard saith in the person of Christ, when he hath rehearsed all the grievous pains of His Passion, he putteth unto these words : *Extat interius planctus praegravior, quum te ingratum experior*, that is to say, but inwardly mourning is much more grievous be-

cause I perceive thou art to me so much unkind. So many sins, so much unkindness, and the more heinous and the more accustomable that they be, the more abominable is thine unkindness.

If the least of many of thy sins had come to light and to the knowledge of men, thou wouldest have been sore ashamed of them. Christ knoweth them and saw thee do them, for *Omnia nuda et aperta sunt oculis ejus*—“All things be naked and open before His eyes”; and yet thou art not ashamed of all thy unkindness.

Alas, man, hear what the king and prophet saith: *Tota die verecundia mea contra me est, et confusio faciei meae co-operuit me*—“All the day long my shame is before me, and my face is covered with confusion.” Thus said this holy king, when our Saviour as yet had not suffered His Passion for him.

This high point of kindness was not as yet shewed unto this man by our Saviour Christ, and he, nevertheless, was ashamed of his sin. Thou hast, peradventure, done much more outrageous sin, and hast been much more unkind after this His most wonderful Passion suffered for thy sake than ever that king was, and that also maketh thy sin much more horrible. Thou

hast after thy promise made unto Him, falsified the same promise and untruly broken it by multiplying of many foul and abominable sins and by often renewing of the same. Thou didst promise once at the Sacrament of Baptism to keep thy faith and truth unto thy Saviour and to forsake the devil and all his works. An honest man or an honest woman would be much ashamed to break their promise, and specially to their friend. Albeit the world is now full of such lorells, that do no more regard to break their promise than for to drink when they be dry. How often hast thou broken thy promise? Alas, man, learn to be ashamed, and say with the Prophet Esdras: *Deus meus, confundor et erubesco levare faciem meam, quoniam iniquitates nostrae levatae sunt super caput nostrum*, that is to say, "O my God, I am confounded and ashamed to lift up my face unto Thee, for our sins be risen far above our heads." Ye women, when there is any black spot in your faces, or any moole \* in your kerchiefs, or any mire upon your clothes, be you not ashamed? Yes forsooth, sir; but I shall tell you whereof you ought to be ashamed. Surely, if your souls have any spots of deadly

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\* i.e., any stain on your head-dress.

sin in them, for when our Saviour so dearly with His most precious blood, and with all these grievous pains, did wash and wipe and cleanse our souls from every spot of deadly sin, ye should be much ashamed to defile them again. If you be ashamed for a foul, miry shoe, and not of a foul, stinking soul, ye make more dearer your shoes than your souls. If ye be ashamed of a spot in your clothes and have no shame for many great blots in your souls, what shall I say but, *Frons meretricis facta est tibi, noluisti erubescere*, that is to say, "Thou hast taken upon thee the face of a brothel, thou wilt not be ashamed." If thou then deeply consider how many shameful blots of sin be in thy soul before the eyes of Almighty God and all the glorious court of heaven, and how by them thou hast utterly broken thy promise unto God and committed so great unkindness against this most loving charity, that was showed unto thee for thy love and for thy sake by our Saviour on the cross, I suppose thou shalt find matter and cause of great shame if any sparkle of honesty be yet left in thy soul.

Thirdly, thou mayest here take matter enough of sorrow, for here your Saviour piteously crieth and complaineth of His great sorrow, saying : *O vos omnes qui transitis per*

viam, attendite et videte si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus—"All ye that pass forth by, take heed and see whether any sorrow was ever like unto Mine." Alas, to see so noble a Man, so gentle and so innocent, so cruelly treated in every part of His most delicate body, and to hear Him so piteously complaining, who shall not be sorry? Surely none, except his heart be harder than any flint stone or adamant stone. These same four points alone may suffice to stir any gentle heart to sorrow. I say His excellent nobleness, His innocence, the cruelty that He did suffer and His piteous complaining.

If thou, O Christian man, sawest thine enemy thus mangled and wounded, it might stir thee to take compassion upon him. If thou saw any Jew or Saracen thus tormented, it might move thee to pity. But much rather to see thy Lord, thy Saviour, and for thy sake thus cruelly treated, thus without any pity crucified and pained, hanging on a cross, should move thee to compassion. For say to me, for whom supposest thou that our Saviour Christ Jesus suffered all those grievous pains? Surely for thy sin. *Pro impiis Christus mortuus est.\** For sinners Christ Jesu died, there was no cause but sin. Thy sin was the cause of His

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death ; thy sin gave Him His death's wound. O sinful creature, how much cause hast thou for to be sorry ! For thy sin was the root and fountain of all His sorrow, and yet thou ceasest not daily by thy sin to increase His sorrow. O what flood of tears did the blessed Magdalen shed, remembering her grievous sin ! She first conceived a great dread in her soul for her sin. Secondly, she was greatly ashamed of her abominations within her soul, for she regarded much more the inward shame of her conscience than the outward shame of the world. And therefore she let not in the presence of many persons to come to the feet of our Saviour and to shew herself a sinner, and there took great sorrow and wept full bitterly for her sin. Thus after dread and shame followed her sorrow. And when had she this dread, shame and sorrow ? Truly before that our Saviour hung on the cross. Yet she knew not that her sin was cause and occasion of His most cruel death.

But when she saw Him hang so painfully on the cross, and considered that for her sin He suffered all the pains, her heart was then so full of sorrow that for very pain it might have burst.

O thou sinful creature ! If thou cannot

sorrow, come learn of this blessed woman to sorrow for thy sin. Think that thy sin was the cause and occasion of all this pain and sorrow, that thy Lord and Saviour did suffer on the cross.

And not only she giveth the example of sorrow, but His blessed Mother abundantly then sorrowed at His death. St John sorrowed, St Peter sorrowed and wept bitterly. All the apostles were in sorrow.

But whereunto speak I of reasonable creatures? The unreasonable and the unsensible creatures shewed a manner of sorrow. The earth quaked, the mighty stones burst asunder, the monuments opened, the dead corpses issued out of their monuments.

All these were moved with compassion. And only thou, wretched sinner, for whose cause He suffered all this pain and grievance, hast no pity nor compassion upon Him.

Alas, how great is thy hardness! How obstinate is thy heart, that will suffer no pity to enter into it! Verily, thou art more harder than are the stones, for they were moved by His passion so mightily that they broke asunder. *Petrae scissae sunt.* When then the hard stones and all the other unreasonable creatures were thus moved and stirred to take some com-

passion of the painful death of Christ, and yet felt no profit by His death, thou much rather shouldst be moved, for whose love He did endure all these grievous pains. Look thou therefore upon this book, and thou shalt here find great cause and matter of sorrow.

Fourthly, if thou canst not sorrow, yet thou mayest here learn to hate. Thou mayest learn to hate sin, which was cause of all this trouble. It is not for nought that the Scripture saith : *Quasi a facie colubri fuge peccatum, dentes leonis, dentes ejus interficientis animas hominum*—“Flee from sin, even as thou wouldest flee from the face of an adder, for as the teeth of the lion devoureth the body of man, so death doth slay their souls.” Sin is so odious, and so great an injury to God, that it was necessary for the recompence of this injury that the Son of God should suffer this most painful death of the cross. Sin provoked Almighty God the Father so deeply to displeasure and wrath, and to take vengeance upon sinners, that without the sacrifice of His own Son on the gibbet of the cross, He would not be appeased nor reconciled unto sinners again. Sin so deadly wounded and blotted the soul of man, that without shedding of the most precious blood of our Saviour Christ Jesu,

no life could be restored unto sinners, nor could the souls be washed from the foul abominable corruption of sin.

Sin so debarreth and shutteth from sinners the gates of heaven, that they might not have been opened, but only by the merit of this most bitter passion, and suffering these most painful torments on the cross. Sin set the gates of hell so wide open and brought all this world into that danger and thraldom of the devil, that we should all have been devoured of the pit of hell, unless we had been ransomed with this most precious treasure that was shed for us on the cross. O sinful creature, hast thou not great cause to hate sin, that hath brought thee into that miserable condition that by thy sin thou hast done and committed high injury against Almighty God, and hast provoked Him to vengeance? That by thy sin thou hast thus mortally wounded thine own soul? That by sin thou hast brought thyself into the danger of the devil, and be damned in hell perpetually? That by thy sin thou hast shut the gates of heaven against thyself? Alas, man, where canst thou find greater occasion for hatred?

If thy neighbour do unto thee but a light injury, thou canst anon hate him; yea, and so

hate him, that thou wilt say thou mayest not find in thy heart to love him. Sin hath done unto thee all these great injuries, and yet thou lovest sin, and canst not hate it! Alas, what madness is this! Joab said unto King David : *Diligis odientes te, et odio habes diligentes te—* “Thou lovest them that hate thee, and thou hatest them that love thee.” The same word may well be said unto every sinner that followeth the course of sin ; and likewise vice doth procure the destruction of sinners, and yet the sinners do follow after them.

Our Saviour with all grace and virtue procureth the salvation of sinners, but Him they will not hear, nor take any ways after His counsel. And this is nothing else but an extreme madness, for they should contrariwise love our Saviour, that so loving for their weal endured the grievous pains of the cross, and hate the devil and sin which were the very cause of death.

By this then you may perceive that in this book you may find matter enough of lamentation, since you may read in this book so much cause of dread, of shame, of sorrow and of hatred. And this is the first writing whereof we promised to speak.

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The second writing that I said was also written in this book, was *Carmen*, that is to say, song. Surely, if either love, or hope, or joy, or comfort, will make a soul to sing, here he may take great occasion to sing.

First, here is great matter of love, and so great that if any person will either give his love freely, or else for some certain price sell it, He that died on the cross is best worthy to have it. If thou search in heaven and on earth one person upon whom thou mayest best bestow thy love, thou shalt find none comparable unto Christ Jesus, so wise, so mighty, so gentle, so kind, so amiable, far passing all other; and there too He is much desirous of thy love. For when Moses had rehearsed the great benefits which Almighty God had given unto man, he saith : *Et nunc audi quid Dominus Deus tuus requirat a te, nisi ut diligas eum*—“ Now hear what thy Lord God doth require of thy part, but that thou love Him.”\*

So now, if thou wilt freely give thy love, thou canst not more wisely nor better bestow it than upon Him who is so excellent and hath all the conditions above said, and there too also is so desirous to have thy love.

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\* Deut. x.

And if thou wilt sell thy love, I trow there is none that will give unto thee more liberally for the same than He hath done. Where shalt thou find him that will shed one drop of blood out of his heart for thy sake? Where shalt thou find him that will give his own soul and life for thy love? There can no more be asked of any man than that: *Majorem charitatem nemo habet nisi ut animam suam ponat quis pro amicis suis*—“No man can show greater charity than to put his own life in jeopardy for his friends.”

But, peradventure, thou wilt say: “Sir, if He had done this for me alone, I had been bound then to have given Him my love wholly again.”

Why, man, art thou so envious, that thou wouldest have no partners of this most precious death with thee, but thine own self? This is a very malicious desire to exclude all others, and especially when thy profit and merit shall not be diminished.

Albeit there be never so many besides that take commodity thereby, I say unto thee, O man, and I assure thee that as fruitfully He died for thee—if thou wilt dispose thyself to be partner of His death—as if there had been no

more but thyself in all this world. Truth it is, there be many more besides thee that be partners of this death. But all they, yea, and if there were a thousand thousand times innumerable more than there be, all that multitude shall nothing diminish any one crumb of merit of this most blessed death belonging unto thee. And again, if thou take much more fruit thereof than any one of them, yet shall they take no impairment, or receive the less because thou hast so much.

Wilt thou see by some example that this is truth that I now say?

When thou seest a torch-light in a house where many persons be, doth not that torch give as much light to them all as if there were but one person there? Every person after the quickness of their sight, taketh more or less profit of that light than doth another, but yet he that taketh more hindereth his fellows nothing in so taking, nor he that taketh less giveth thereby any occasion for his fellows to take any more.

And if it be thus of the light of a torch, much rather it is so of the merit of this most gracious death, and of this most precious blood, which by the reason of the Godhead abun-

dantly sufficeth for the redemption of innumerable souls, were their sins never so many, never so horrible, never so abominable.

Surely, as St John saith : *Ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris, non pro nostris tantum sed et totius mundi*—“He was and is a sacrifice abundantly sufficient for the sins of all this world.”\*

When then for thy sake, and for thy love, He suffered this most horrible death, which was so painful that the only remembrance of it made Him to sweat bloody sweat, and that in so great abundance that it trickled down by His side unto the ground ; if the only thinking of this death was so painful, how painful was the suffering of the same indeed ! How might He more evidently express unto thee the love of His heart than by this means ? Or what more might He have done for thy love, as He sayeth Himself : *Quid ultra facere debui, et non feci?*—“What might I further have done, which I did not for thy love ?”

Thou mayest then find here in this book great matter for love.

Here is also great matter of hope, and especially to sinners that will utterly forsake their sins and amend their lives for Christ Jesu’s

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\* 1 John ii.

sake. Doubtless for such He suffered this most bitter death. *Pro impiis Christus mortuus est.* "For wicked sinners Jesus Christ died."\* And in another place the same St Paul saith : *Christus Jesus venit in hunc mundum salvos facere peccatores*—"Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners that will amend their lives."†

O Christian soul, take thou upon thee the cross of penance and be crucified with Him, and then without doubt thou shalt be partner of the merit of His crucifixion and of His most fruitful Passion.

What shall exclude thee from His merit ? Almighty God the Father ? Nay. *Qui proprio filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum, quo modo non cum illo nobis omnia donabit ?* "He that did not spare His own Son, but gave Him unto the death for us all, what shall He deny us ?" What greater evidence canst thou ask that Almighty God the Father will forgive thy sin than this, that He would not forsake to give unto death His own Son ? I say, His own most dearly beloved Son, of whom He said : *Hic est filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacui*—"This is My well-beloved Son, in Whom is all My pleasure." What greater evi-

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\* Rom. v.      † 1 Tim. i.

dence and proof mayest thou desire, that He will forgive thy sins, than that He would put this most inestimable jewel into such a danger for thy sake, and send it unto this most painful and shameful and sorrowful death of the cross ?

But, peradventure, thou thinkest that our Saviour, because thou hast been so unkind unto Him, will not receive thee unto His mercy ? I say, therefore, forsake thy sins, and accuse thy unkindness, and be sorry for it ; and doubt not but He will forgive and forget thine unkindness and receive thee again unto His great mercy.

. . . . .

St Bernard saith : " Who may not be ravished to hope and confidence, if he consider the order of our Lord's body, His head bowing down to offer a kiss, His arms spread to embrace us, His hands bored through to make liberal gifts, His side opened to show unto us the love of His heart, His feet fastened with nails that He shall not start away but abide with us, and all His body stretched, forcing Himself to give it wholly unto us ? "

Surely, O man, He that would thus and after this manner exhibit His body unto thee on the cross (if thou wilt endeavour thee upon thy

part), He will not refuse thee but take thee unto His mercy.

This most precious blood that He shed on the cross crieth always mercy for sinners that do thus return. And, therefore, St Paul sayeth : *Accessistis ad sanguinem melius loquentem quam Abel*—“Ye become and have returned you unto the blood that speaketh more graciously than did the blood of Abel.” The blood of Abel cried vengeance before God, as Almighty God said unto Cain in the Book of Genesis : *Sanguis Abel fratri tui clamat ad me vindictam de terra*—“The blood of thy brother Abel crieth vengeance in Mine ears from the ground where it is shed.”

But the most precious blood of our Saviour Jesu Christ crieth mercy for all sinners that do repent ; and our Saviour now, before the face of His Father, sheweth His wounds and sheweth His most precious blood, and ceaseth not to procure mercy for them. This plainly doth affirm the blessed apostle St John saying in this manner : *Filioli, haec scribo vobis ut non peccatis : sed et si quis peccaverit, advocatum habemus apud Patrem Iesum Christum justum, et ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris*, that is to say, “Children, I write these things unto you to the intent that you should not sin. Nevertheless, if it

fortune any man to sin, we have an advocate for us, Christ Jesus, before the face of His Father. And He is righteous, and without sin, and a very satisfaction for all our sins."

Who then attentively doth behold this Crucifix and verily believeth that on the cross was paid the ransom of all sinners, how may he not fully trust that if he asks mercy for his sins they shall be forgiven him? So that every sinner may find great matter and occasion of hope.

In the cross is also matter of joy. Here is occasion of such excessive joy that a soul which verily tasteth it cannot but highly rejoice in the same. And therefore St Paul did say : *Mihi autem absit gloriari nisi in cruce Domini Jesu Christi*—“God forbid that I rejoice in any other thing than in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, doubtless, is great cause for every true Christian man to rejoice, and specially for three points.

The first is that by the death of our Saviour on the cross and shedding of His most precious blood on the cross we be fully reconciled to Almighty God as often as we do true repentance with a fast purpose of amendment.

Thus St Paul saith (ad Col.): *Complacuit per eum reconciliare omnia in ipsum per sanguinem crucis*—“It hath pleased God the Father that by

His Son and by His blood shed on the cross all should be reconciled."

But you will ask me what meaneth this word "reconciled"? It is as much to say, as to be made at one with Almighty God and to be at friendship with Him, as two men when they have been at variance to be made lovers together again, so the displeasure which He had against us for our sin is taken away, and His great wrath is fully pacified. So where we were by sin the children of the devil, now we have recovered to be made again the children of God and, consequently, the inheritors of heaven. O thou Christian man, is not here great cause to rejoice?

If thou hast a rich man for thy father which had loved thee much, and he for thy misdemeanour had cast thee out of his favour, and so thou wert in jeopardy to lose thy inheritance, if by means of a brother of thine thou mightest be brought into his favour again and be taken for his son as thou wast before and restored thereby to thine inheritance, hadst thou not great cause to be joyous and rejoice, that by this means thou hast recovered again thy father's love with all the commodities belonging unto the same? In like manner it is of every sinner, for he by his lewd demeanour and by his sinful

dealing hath so displeased his Father that he is cast out from the favour of his Father, and is in peril to lose his inheritance which his most loving Father had provided for him.

Nevertheless, His only begotten Son, by His inestimable goodness and charity, suffering the most painful death of the cross and shedding His most precious blood for amends and recompence of our ungracious dealings, hath reconciled us again, and made us at one with His Father, and set us at a perfect peace, concord and unity. And this is concerning the first point.

The second, by the virtue of the cross and of His most blessed Passion, the power of our enemies be much broken, for on the cross our Saviour by His death got the victory upon them, for the which St Paul said : *Expolians principatus et potestates traduxit confidenter, triumphans eos in semetipso*—“Christ Jesus, spoiling the mighty power of the devil, hath openly detected their frauds, and got a very triumph of them in His own person.” And therefore nothing is yet more terrible unto them than the sign of the cross. A blessed virgin, St Christian, had such a confidence in the token of the cross, that when she felt herself tempted with her ghostly enemy, she marked herself with the

same token, and at every temptation she got the better of the devils ; and by this holy token chased them away and put them ever to flight.

Thirdly, by the virtue of the cross and of this most fruitful death, our handwriting which made most against us, was clearly put out. Where was it written ? In the book of our own conscience. There is no manner of sin that we do, but it is written in the book of our conscience. And if we repent us not of the same and be heartily sorry for it before our death, this book of our conscience shall be shewed against us in the dreadful day of judgement. Nevertheless, if we repent us and confess us, and do true repentance therefor, then by the virtue of this Passion it shall be scraped out of the book of our conscience. Therefore St Paul calleth sin our own handwriting : *Delevit quod adversum nos erat, chirographum decreti quod erat contrarium nobis, et ipsum tulit de medio, affigens illud cruci*—“ Christ Jesus (he sayeth) put out the handwriting of that decree which was against us, and so withdrew it, fastening it unto the cross.” When thou perceivest, O sinful creature, that by the cross of Christ, and by that most precious blood which was shed on the cross, thou art reconciled and made at one with God, and the power of

thine enemies is greatly repressed. And finally thy sin which was most against thee was crucified on the same cross, so that thou mayest clearly see that here is great matter of excessive joy and to rejoice in the most blessed Crucifix.

Finally, in the cross is also matter of great comfort, when a person hath deserved a great open shame, and is brought even to the plunge of the matter, and yet by the means of help he is delivered from the same, is not this his deliverance from this open shame a comfort unto him? Yes, doubtless.

The noble woman Susanna, as the Prophet Daniel telleth, albeit she was guiltless, yet for because she would not assent to the wretched desire of two lewd priests, she was by them wrongfully accused and put to great shame; for they wrongfully slandered her, that she had taken another man besides her husband, and that she had committed adultery. Nevertheless, when the matter was tried by the goodness of Almighty God, and she was clearly discharged from this terrible occasion, and clearly delivered from this shame, it was a great comfort unto her.

The blessed Magdalen by her wretched living had deserved great shame, yet when she came to our Saviour Christ, and wept at His

feet, and so by His great mercy was excused of her shame, her heart was set at a great rest and in great comfort. The woman of whom the Gospel telleth, that was taken in adultery by her enemies and so brought before our Saviour Christ, and there in His presence, and before all His people, her shameful deed was published, who may think but that she was sore accombred with that open shame? but yet when our Saviour had confounded her enemies, and delivered her from that shame, she was restored to much ease and comfort of her heart. Why tell I this? Truly to the intent that we may see great matter of comfort in the cross, for we sinners have deserved great shame for our abominable sin, surely so great that if we verily knew the greatness of the shame that we have deserved, we might never sustain the remembrance thereof. And yet that most inestimable goodness of Christ by that horrible shame that He suffered on the cross, delivered us from everlasting shame. He took there upon His back all the burthen of our sins. There wanted no circumstances of horrible shame, for then the death of the cross was the most shameful manner of death that was put to any villain. It was then the most villainous death to be hanged on the gibbet of the cross; and this

was done in no secret place, but high upon an open mountain, that all the people might behold and look upon Him. And He was hanged there naked, and between two thieves, as though He was a prince and captain of misdoers ; and against the feast of Easter, when the most number of people did assemble unto the temple of the Jews, nigh unto the city of Jerusalem, that all the people might commodiously resort to gaze upon this cruel spectacle. This thing was done also in the open day, for from the midst of the day He thus did hang alive on the cross by the space of three hours and more. And all the strangers as they passed close by did wonder upon Him ; the soldiers opprobriously rebuked Him, the priests with words of derision and mockery assaulted Him, the thieves that hung beside Him blasphemed Him ; finally all His enemies rejoiced in their victory against Him. Alas, what creature might be more shamefully treated than was our Saviour Christ Jesu hanging thus on the cross ? A truth it is, now the cross is made honourable by His death ; but then, as I said, it was more shameful than any gibbet or gallows, or any other instrument of death. And moreover, and besides that, He was hanged on the same with the utmost despite and villany that could be

thought of or devised for any creature to be put unto. O thou Christian soul, Christ Jesu the Son of God took upon Him all this shame for thy love, to the intent that if thou wilt amend thy life and forsake thy sin and do true penance, thou shalt by His shame be delivered from all shame. His shame shall hide thy sins. He was there naked and spoiled of all His clothes to the intent that thou shouldest be covered under His mantle from thy shame. And therefore by the Prophet Ezechiel He saith : *Expandi amictum meum super te, et operui ignominiam tuam*—“I did spread My mantle upon thee, and so covered thee from shame.” Let every person here think with themselves what deeds they have done worthy of great shame, which if they had come to light and been openly known, they should have been blotted with open infamy here in this life, and without the special mercy of God in the day of judgement they should thereof have an open shame before all the world, and finally in hell an everlasting shame. But from all those shames, by the gracious mantle of Christ, many be covered. He hath mercifully spread His mantle over them, and kept them from those importable shames. Of this covering also the Prophet David saith : *Beati, quorum tecta sunt peccata*

—“Blessed are those whose sins be covered.” O thou sinful creature, if thou mightest see what shame thou hast deserved for thy sin, thou shouldest reckon this a singular comfort. But thou seest not the abomination of thy sin, and, therefore, thou perceivest not what shame thou hast deserved.

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Every sinner that lacketh the light of faith neither considereth the greatness of his sin, nor the presence of Almighty God which looketh upon the same. He regardeth nothing the blessed angels which behold the abominable conscience to their great discomfort, nor the devils, his mortal enemies, which be full joyous of his shameful demeanour. If the sinner clearly considered all these things (as they be matter in very deed), he would doubtless be greatly ashamed of himself and in great discomfort. Nevertheless, a penitent soul that is sore pressed and wrong with utter shame, like as were the women of whom I spoke before, I mean Susanna and Mary Magdalen and the woman that was apprehended in adultery; I say, such a soul being holden in such distress of shame, and considering that, by the opprobrious and shameful death which our Saviour did suffer on the cross, He hath delivered all true

penitent sinners from the shame which He deserved for their sins, and that He thereby took all their sins on His own neck, hath great cause (as me seemeth) to take a wonderful comfort in the most blessed cross. So that here also (as I said) is great matter and cause of very comfort and of solace incomparable. Wherefore, to conclude my tale as touching this second writing, if either love, or hope, or joy, or comfort will make us sing, here in this book of the Crucifix is great occasion of song. If thou first truly lament with Christ, thou shalt after joyfully sing with Him, and each of these shall induce other; hatred of sin shall bring into thy heart the love of Christ, dread shall bring in hope, sorrow shall bring in joy, and shame here taken for thy sin shall bring into thy soul perpetual comfort. And thus much I have said for the second writing.

The third writing that is written in this book I said is *vae*, that is to say woe: *vae* be-tokeneth in Scripture everlasting damnation. And doubtless this woe may such sinners here read, that neither will lament nor sing with Christ on the cross, as He said unto the Jews: *Cecinimus vobis et non saltastis, lamentavimus vobis et non planxitis*, that is to say, "We sung unto you, and you sorrowed not." And soon

after the Gospel telleth that He reproachfully spake unto the cities, to which He had shewed many great miracles, and they for all that did no manner of penance for their sins, to such there He terribly threatened, saying : *Vae tibi Coronzain, vae tibi Bethsaida*—“Woe shall be to thee, Bethsaida.” By this we may learn that such which will not stir in themselves these affections above rehearsed, whereby they may lament or else sing with Christ on the cross, they shall come to everlasting woe.

I say who that will not stir in their hearts dread, shame, sorrow and hatred of their sins, and so truly lament with Jesu, either else quicken in their hearts love, hope, rejoicing and comfort, and so sing with Jesu, doubtless they shall come to the woe of everlasting damnation, which woe is the third writing that, as we said before, is written on the cross.

Behold, O thou Christian soul, the extreme pains that our Saviour suffered on the cross for thy sin. And if thou wilt not by such afflictions, as I now have rehearsed, enforce thyself to be made partner of the same pains in this life, thou shalt in the life to come endure like manner of pains, and that everlastingly, where He suffered them on the cross for a time.

Let us, therefore, deeply consider what

pains He did endure and suffer on the cross. The first, when He was crucified He was spoiled and made naked of all His clothes, and so violently thrown down upon the hard timber, and His hands and feet cruelly digged in with nails, as He sayeth in Psalm 21: *Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos*—“They have digged My hands and My feet.” This He suffered for thy sin, O sinful creature, and if thou wilt not amend thy life betimes, thou shalt be spoiled of all thy clothes, and so cast down into hell upon a more painful couch than was the cross. The prophet Isaias saith unto such a sinner: *Subtus te servatur tinea et opera mentum tuum verinis*\*—“The moths that shall tear and gnaw thy body shall lie under thee, and the burning worms and serpents shall sprawl above thee and dig away part of thy body.” O think what an horrible pain it were for to lie in a bed full of snakes, adders and toads, creeping and sprawling, and biting and pinching thee on every part.

The second, when our Saviour was reared up aloft on the cross, that same hanging there was very painful unto Him. O what pain was

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\* The Vulgate text is: *Subter te sternetur tinea, et operimentum tuum erunt vermes*.—Isai. xiv, 11.

it unto that most delicate and tender body of His to hang so long in that tormentry!

But where He did hang here but for a time, if thou amend not thy life, thou shalt hang in the gibbet of hell for evermore. For be thou well assured that if thou shalt suffer for thine own sins in hell, thou shalt suffer a more grievous tormentry than He did, and that without ceasing. For as it is said in the Apocalypse : *Fumus tormentorum ascendet in secula seculorum*—“The smoke of the tormentries of that place shall ascend by innumerable worlds,” that is to say without end. The torments which He suffered on the cross were the nails, the thorns, the ropes, the scourges, the spear ; but the torments that thou shalt suffer, shall a thousand-fold pass them. Look how far the malice and wit of the devils passeth the malice and wit of the Jews, so far exceed the engines which the devils have conceived and forged for the damned souls to be tormented, above them that the Jews maliciously devised against our Saviour Christ.

The third, our Saviour endured an extreme heat and fervour, when He for the great affliction and agony which He did suffer, was constrained for the grievous anguish to sweat water and blood. But this heat is nothing to the

heat of the burning fire of hell which never shall be quenched. *Ignis ille non extinguetur*; as the Gospel saith, "That fire shall never be quenched. The Prophet Isaias sayeth: *Quis ex vobis poterit habitare cum ardoribus sempiternis?* —"Which of you may continually inhabit with the heats that never shall cease?"

O sinful creature, think with thyself the largeness of these two words, ever and never. Think with thyself how painful it shall be ever to be in that burning fire, and never to be released of thy pain. If thou shouldest be compelled to lie but one night upon a soft feather bed, I suppose thou wouldest weary thereof? But how weary shalt thou be ever to lie stewing and burning without ceasing?

The fourth, our Saviour Christ endured also cold, not only for His nakedness, but also when His natural heat by death left His body. But the damned sinner shall endure in hell a more excessive cold. Job saith of such, *Transibunt ab aquis nivis ad calorem nimium*—"They shall be shifted out of the cold snow and brought into the outrageous heats." O Jesus, a tender hand which in the frost and snow hath been made extreme cold and suddenly is brought into the heat of the fire, feeleth a greater pain; but nothing comparable unto that shift-

ing from that cold into that heat which is in hell.

The fifth, our Saviour on His cross heard blasphemous and opprobrious words, and much insulting of His enemies against Him, which doubtless was very painful unto Him. But the damned sinners shall in hell hear nothing else but continual outcries, opprobrious insulting, blasphemies of the devils and others that be damned.

*Blasphemabunt Deum coeli doloribus*—“They shall blaspheme the God of heaven for continual pain and sorrows.” And they shall see before their faces continually the most horrible and ireful countenance of their immortal enemies the devils.

The sixth, our Saviour wept on the cross for the sins of others, as St Paul saith : *Cum clamore et lacrymis*—“With crying and tears.” But the damned sinners that would not here weep with Christ, such tears as might wash their sins, shall weep in hell for their own sins, such tears as shall scald their bodies, and yet they shall be never the better. *Ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium*—“There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” the smoke of the fire shall make them weep, and the coldness of the snow shall make their teeth gnash and chatter in their heads.

Yea, and that is more marvellous, neither the cold shall temper the heat, nor contrariwise, the heat temper the cold, but either of them shall increase the violence of the other. Even as in the forge of a smith, the cold water when it is cast into the fire causeth the fire to be much more fierce and violent.

The seventh, our Saviour on the cross had extreme dryness, of which He complained and said: *Sitio*—"I am dry"; and no marvel though He were dry, after so much pain and travail, after so much bleeding and sweating, whereby no moisture almost was left in His body. But how unmeasurable dryness shall the damned souls endure in the fire of hell? The rich glutton that was buried in hell teacheth us what dryness is there, for he would have given all this world to have had one drop of water or liquor to have refreshed his tongue, that was made so dry with the flame of that fire.

The eighth, our Saviour on the cross had much sorrow and heaviness. If He for the only remembrance of the pain to come was in so great an agony that He sweat water and blood, who can express or think what sorrow and heaviness He suffered when all the pains were present and presently did oppress Him. Nevertheless every damned person, by the

reason of their continual and everlasting pains shall have much more sorrow and heaviness, for the which it is written in the book of Sapience : *Penitentiam agentes et pre tristitia spiritus gementes*—“They verily lamentably repent themselves, and for extreme heaviness of spirit mourn and sorrow,” thinking for how brief and transitory pleasures they lost the joys everlasting and got the pains that ever shall endure.

The ninth, our Saviour on the cross did suffer much infamy and shame, and specially to deliver (as I said) all sinners that would amend themselves, and forsake their sins, from everlasting shame ; but such as will not, shall suffer their own shame, as they have deserved. The true penitent soul shall be satiate with perpetual glory, but he that will not repent himself shall have perpetual shame and infamy.

Almighty God sayeth to such by his prophet Nahum : *Revelabo pudenda tua in facie tua* : “I will make open all thy shamefulness and evil dealing in thine own face.” And the prophet Jeremy sayeth : *Saturabitur opprobriis*—“He shall be satiate with opprobrious shame.”

The tenth, above all other pains that our Saviour did suffer on the cross, was to be desolate of all comfort, yea of His Father, and to be

as a person forsaken of Almighty God, and destitute of all help and succour, for which He sore complaineth on His cross, crying unto His Father : *Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?*—“O my God, O my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” But this forsaking was but for a season, for within a short time after, He was raised again to immortal glory. But the damned sinners, which shall be punished for their own sins in hell, shall ever be forsaken, and fully be deprived, not only from all joy and comfort, but from that most glorious sight of the face of Almighty God, wherein standeth all blessedness and consummation of all comfort ; and this shall more pinch the damned souls, than all the other torments of hell besides. For the which St. Chrysostom saith : *Ego autem multo graviores cruciatus duo, quam gehennam, removeri et adduci ab illa gloria*—“I think, saith he, that to be removed and cast out from that everlasting glory, is more grievous torment than all the other pains of hell.”

Finally, our Saviour on the cross suffered the pains of death for our sins, whereby we had deserved death ; and therefore He suffered death to deliver us from the death of sin. Nevertheless He remained no long time in the bonds of death ; but the damned sinner that must pay

his own debts in hell, shall suffer everlasting death, not so that the sinners shall have no life nor feeling in them, but they shall be ever as though they were in the extreme pains of death, and yet they shall have a perfect sense of the pains, and never die. The pains shall be to them so violent that they shall perish a thousand times, and desire continually to die, but death shall fly away from them. *Desiderabunt mori, et mors fugiet ab eis*—“They shall desire death, and death shall fly from them.”

O Jesu, in what misery they shall be in, that ever shall covet death, and never may fully die.

The prophet David, speaking of their pain sayeth : *Mors depascet eos*; which words may have three senses, one is that death shall be their pastor and herdsman, he shall order them and lead them to their pastures. In hell are two pastures : the one is full of snow, the other full of fire, for which Job sayeth, *Ad calorem nimium transient ab aquis nivium*—“They shall walk from the snow into the fire, and again from the fire into the snow.” This may be one sense. Another may be this : they shall be the continued meat of death, as ye see in the pastures where the sheep feed. They crop the grass ever as it riseth and keepeth it low, and so the grass is ever in eating, and never full eaten.

In like manner death shall continually crop the damned persons in hell ; and he shall ever be gnawing and eating upon them, and yet they shall never be fully consumed.

The third sense may be this : death shall be their continual meat, for they shall ever long and desire to die, they shall ever above all other things covet to have death, and their desire shall always be alike fresh and fervent. Another comfort and refreshing besides this they shall have none. But whatsoever the sense of these words be, thou mayest well perceive by them, O thou Christian soul, that if thou shalt come to that place to pay thy debts of thine own sins, it shall be too grievous and too importable for thee to sustain ; for, as I said, behold every manner of pain our Saviour Christ suffered on the cross for all our sins, if we be not before our death by such affections as I did before rehearse made partners of His suffering, we shall suffer all the same pains in hell perpetually.

And therefore, it is a truth, we may read in the book of the Crucifix great matter of woe, which is the third writing that we had to speak of.

Now, thou sinful creature, have often before thine eyes this wonderful book, which, as I said,

is written within and without. In the which also thou mayest read three manner of writings, that is to say, lamentation, song, and woe. If thou wilt begin to lament with Jesu, thou shalt thereby come to sing with Him, and thereby thou shalt be made so fully partner of His passion that the debts of thy sins shall be thoroughly paid, and thou shalt escape everlasting woe. But if thou dost refuse this remedy, and follow the desires of this world, and of the flesh, be thou well assured that then thou shalt pay thine own debts amongst the devils in hell with everlasting woe. From the which He defend us, that for our love has this day suffered on the cross His most painful and sorrowful death, our Saviour Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Per Johannem Fyssher Episcopum Rofensem.  
The memory of the Crucified crucifies vices.  
(St Greg.)*

Let him who is bitten by the wiles of Satan behold Christ hanging on the cross. *(St Aug.)*







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